



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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# **Proposed enhancements to bovine TB cattle control measures: tackling cattle-to-cattle transmission**

**A consultation exercise contributing to the  
delivery of the Government's Strategy for  
achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free  
(OTF) status for England**

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## Contents

Part A: Background.....	1
1. Purpose of the consultation .....	1
2. How this consultation links to the Government's wider strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England .....	1
3. Recent enhancements to TB control measures in cattle.....	2
Part B: Proposal for change.....	2
4. Pre-movement testing and SOAs .....	2
5. Why are we proposing to make a change?.....	2
Part C: Additional measures in 2014/15.....	3
6. Risk Based Trading - Cattle keepers to provide TB history when selling stock. ....	4
7. Compulsory post-movement TB testing of cattle moved from the annual tested herds in England and Wales to the Low Risk Area of England .....	4
8. Cross Compliance Rules: TB.....	5
Part D: Tell us what you think .....	5
9. Your comments on the following specific questions are invited: .....	6

# Part A: Background

## 1. Purpose of the consultation

1.1 Bovine TB is the most pressing animal health problem in the UK. It is a devastating disease which threatens our cattle industry and presents a risk to other livestock as well as wildlife species (such as badgers), pets and humans. The Government remains determined to tackle bovine TB by all available means, including through enhanced cattle control measures.

1.2 Defra is inviting views from stakeholders on the impacts of a proposal to abolish (with effect from 1 October 2014) the current TB pre-movement testing exemption for movements within Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOAs) situated in annual TB testing areas in England.

1.3 Also included within this consultation are:

- A call for views on whether cattle keepers should be legally required to provide the TB history of their herd when selling stock – section 6;
- A call for views on compulsory post-movement testing of cattle (that are not going for slaughter) moved from herds in the Annual testing areas of England and Wales to herds in the Low Risk Area (LRA) of England – section 7; and
- Notification that, from January 2015, we aim to extend the cross compliance rule for overdue routine TB surveillance and check tests to include all TB tests – section 8 below.

1.4 We would welcome views on the issues covered in our consultation: details of how to respond are set out in Part D of this document.

## 2. How this consultation links to the Government's wider strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England

2.1 In April 2014 Defra published its Strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status (OTF) for England. Cattle measures remain the foundation on which the Strategy is based. The Strategy can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england>.

### **3. Recent enhancements to TB control measures in cattle**

3.1 In developing new or revised cattle controls we aim to strike a balance between robust disease control - aimed ultimately at achieving OTF status for England - while helping to support a sustainable livestock industry.

3.2 Between November 2013 and January 2014 Defra consulted on proposals to:

- Remove the pre-movement testing (PrMT) exemption for movements of cattle to and from common land – this change will come into effect on 30 June 2014.
- Phase out the practice of partially de-restricting TB-restricted premises – we are on track to achieve this by 1 October 2014.
- No longer allow TB Isolation Units – following the previous consultation, and further consideration of the implications for disease control, Ministers have concluded that the option of establishing a TB Isolation Unit should continue to be available. However, the operating rules will be tightened such that from 1 October 2014 new TB Isolation Units will only be approved if they are clearly separated from the main herd, including by being registered to a different County Parish Holding (CPH).
- Revise The Tuberculosis (England) Order 2007 to make it clear that wild and untestable cattle may be compulsorily slaughtered – the Order was amended to reflect this change on 6 April 2014; and
- Publish location details of bovine TB breakdowns as a matter of course – we are currently working on the details of this.

3.3 In our previous consultation we also asked for preliminary views on two further possible changes to cattle controls: the removal of the pre-movement testing exemption for cattle movements within a SOA (included in this consultation); and the removal of the remaining pre-movement testing exemption for cattle movements to shows (we are considering options in relation to this).

3.4 The summary of responses can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bovine-tb-new-control-measures-tackling-transmission-between-cattle-herds>.

## **Part B: Proposal for change**

### **4. Pre-movement testing and SOAs**

4.1 The legal requirement to pre-movement test cattle was introduced in 2006 to reduce the risk of TB being spread through cattle movements. Since then cattle moved from

herds subject to annual or two-yearly TB surveillance testing must have had a test with negative results within the 60 days preceding the movement.

4.2 To reduce the burden on cattle farmers some movements were exempted from the requirement to test. A 2011 review of the policy concluded that some of the exemptions potentially undermined the policy objective of reducing the risk of TB spread. In July 2012 one exemption was removed and two were revised. The SOA exemption was revised so that cattle moved within a SOA that included holdings in the annual testing (i.e. High or Edge areas) and the Low Risk Area must be pre-movement tested. A further change to pre-movement testing rules comes into effect on 30 June 2014 when the exemption for movements to/from common land will no longer apply.

4.3 SOAs, created in 2003, allow livestock keepers to link different premises which fall under their sole management and control to disapply the regular standstill rules (when cattle, sheep, goats or pigs are moved onto a farm, no cattle, sheep or goats may move off for six days). There is no distance limit set for holdings within the same SOA. Movements between premises within a SOA situated in the same TB testing frequency area are also currently exempted from pre-movement testing rules. We propose abolishing that exemption. In the longer term Defra intends to abolish SOAs in England over a two-year transitional period beginning in 2016 in line with the Farm Regulation Task Force (Macdonald) recommendations to simplify the livestock movements landscape.

## 5. Why are we proposing to make a change?

5.1 An important aim of the TB Strategy is to provide better protection to all cattle keepers in annual testing areas by stabilising and, in the longer term, reducing TB incidence in this area, including by strengthening cattle controls. Our proposal supports that objective.

5.2 We have identified two options:

- **Option 1 - Remove the pre-movement testing exemption for cattle moved within SOAs. But Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) would be able to licence movements without pre-movement tests where all premises included in the SOA are within 10 miles of the main farm.**
- **Option 2 - Remove the pre-movement testing exemption for cattle moved within SOAs with pre-movement testing required for all movements from the High Risk and Edge Areas, regardless of the distance.**

5.3 Option 1 is our preferred option. This would address the risks from longer distance/higher risk movements but by excluding short distance movements would not be over burdensome for business operators. The 10-mile rule would fit with existing criteria for CPH allocation and also fit with the Macdonald proposals on the future CPH structure. We would welcome comments on the following proposal:

**From October 2014 we should remove from The Tuberculosis (England) Order 2007, the remaining pre-movement testing exemption for movements within SOAs.**

**However, in line with our commitment to implement proportionate cattle measures AHVLA would, from October 2014 and subject to a satisfactory veterinary risk assessment, licence movements without pre-movement tests in SOAs where all premises are within 10 miles of the main holding.**

5.4 The attached Economic Assessment sets out the anticipated impacts and benefits of the two identified options. This assessment suggests that our preferred option would be a low-cost measure on the available evidence. **We would welcome your comments on our Economic Assessment.**

## **Part C: Additional measures in 2014/15**

### **6. Risk Based Trading - Cattle keepers to provide TB history when selling stock.**

6.1 The principle behind TB risk-based trading is that cattle farmers have better information about the TB history of cattle they are buying to help them determine and manage the risk that bovine TB poses to their herds. In particular it could ensure that farmers are able to take more informed decisions when introducing new animals into their herds.

6.2 Since November 2013 cattle keepers have been encouraged (i.e. on a voluntary basis) to provide 3 pieces of information before selling cattle:

- Date of the animal's last pre-movement test, if applicable;
- Date of the last whole herd test; and
- Whether the herd has ever had TB and, if it has, when it last came off restrictions.

6.3 Feedback to date suggests that cattle keepers are interested in having this information, though it is not currently routinely provided by all sellers and displayed at all markets. To maximise the potential benefits of TB risk-based trading we would welcome views on whether Government should consider making the provision of this information mandatory. We will consider responses received in deciding whether to take this idea further; if so we would run a consultation on a specific proposal.

## **7. Compulsory post-movement TB testing of cattle moved from the annual tested herds in England and Wales to the Low Risk Area of England**

7.1 Mandatory post-movement tests are already required for cattle moving to Scotland from annual testing areas in England or Wales (no fewer than 60 days and no more than 120 days after their arrival in Scotland). If the required post-movement test has not been carried out by 120 days of its arrival in Scotland, the test is regarded as overdue and herd movement restrictions are imposed on the receiving herd until the test has been carried out.

7.2 Currently in England post-movement TB testing is encouraged rather than required but Defra is considering mirroring the Scottish Government's requirement. At this stage we are inviting views on the proposal for compulsory post-movement testing of cattle moved from herds on annual testing in England and Wales to herds in the LRA (four-yearly herd testing) of England. Cattle moved for slaughter (within 120 days) would not be affected. There is a low level of disease found in the Low Risk Area. The majority of cases are associated with movements from the High Risk Areas. Post-movement testing would enhance the sensitivity of the TB test, detecting infected cattle that may have been missed during pre-movement testing. It would also strengthen our intention to secure Officially TB Free status for the Low Risk Area. Subject to this consultation, we will consult further on the details in due course.

## **8. Cross Compliance Rules: TB**

8.1 Timely bovine TB testing of cattle herds is a key biosecurity and disease control measure. Cattle keepers who fail to complete their TB tests on time increase disease risks not only for their own herds but also for all their neighbours. Since 1 January 2014 cattle keepers in England who fail to complete routine TB surveillance or check tests by prescribed deadlines face having their farming subsidies reduced under a 'zero tolerance' approach. AHVLA provide the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) with details of all farmers who have not arranged for TB surveillance and check tests to be carried out by the due date.

8.2 Using the existing cross compliance rules, RPA apply a percentage reduction to the CAP Scheme payments (including Pillar 1 - Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and Pillar 2 - Rural Development Scheme payments) claimed by those farmers who have not completed their herd's TB test by the due deadline. The level of reduction depends on how long the test was overdue, and other relevant criteria such as repeated instances of overdue testing.

8.3 From 1 January 2015 we aim to extend our 'zero tolerance' cross-compliance approach (currently only relevant for TB surveillance and check tests) to include all types of TB tests.



8.4. It is the keeper's responsibility to notify AHVLA in writing of any extenuating circumstances for failing to complete a test within the prescribed timeframe, and this information forms part of the referral process to RPA. If cattle keepers believe they will find it difficult to complete their TB test by the prescribed deadline they should contact their AHVLA office at the earliest opportunity.

## Part D: Tell us what you think

### 9. Your comments on the following specific questions are invited:

- i. Do you agree that AHVLA should licence movements without a test where SOA premises are within 10 miles of the main farm?
- ii. What would be the impacts of making this change under the preferred option?
- iii. What would be the impacts of requiring pre-movement testing for all moves within a SOA, regardless of distance?
- iv. Do you agree that Government should consider making the provision of TB history for animals being sold mandatory?
- v. Do you agree that the compulsory post-movement testing should be brought in for movements from the annual testing areas in England and Wales to the Low Risk Area – for cattle to live?

9.1 If you wish to respond, please submit your comments by **11 July 2014**.

9.2 You can respond in one of three ways.

- **Online** by completing the questionnaire at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/bovine-tb/proposed-enhancements-to-bovine-tb-cattle-control>
- **Email** to [bTBengage@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:bTBengage@defra.gsi.gov.uk)
- **Post** to:

Cattle Measures Team Defra  
Area 5D, Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

9.3 Our preferred method is online because it is the fastest and most cost-effective way for us to collate, analyse and summarise responses. If you require a different format please let us know.

9.4 Given our obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, the responses we receive may be published. If you do not wish to be identified as the author of your response, please state this clearly.

9.5 Final decisions on whether to proceed with the proposals will be made by Ministers.