

Tuberculosis (TB) testing

Presenting your cattle for TB testing



ADVICE AND GUIDANCE



If you keep cattle, water buffalo or bison, your animals will be routinely tested for TB.

You are required by law to provide appropriate facilities and assistance to enable an inspector to carry out the test.

This leaflet explains what the person carrying out the test needs to do and your obligations.

A properly planned test, using well designed and constructed handling facilities, will avoid unnecessary stress for you and your cattle, save time and, most importantly, be safer for all involved.

Who will visit you?

The person carrying out your test will be an inspector appointed by Animal Health. This will normally be your own veterinary surgeon, an Animal Health veterinary surgeon or an Animal Health Officer. They have been trained to carry out the tuberculin skin test following the procedures described in this leaflet.

Under certain circumstances, a blood test, called the Gamma Interferon test, will be used in combination with the skin test. This is normally carried out by an Animal Health Officer who will take blood samples from your animals.

What animals will be tested?

Animal Health will send you a test notification letter which specifies which animals need testing. If you are uncertain, please contact your local Animal Health office or veterinary surgeon, for advice.

How you should prepare for the test

Before the test:

- **Identification**

You need to ensure your cattle are correctly identified in line with the current legislative requirements (see overleaf).

This will make it easier and quicker to identify them and record skin measurements or blood samples against the correct animal. It will also help when checking that all eligible animals have been presented for testing.

- **Records**

You may be asked to provide your herd register/cattle movement records and veterinary medicines records, so please have these available for inspection.



- **Veterinary treatment**

You may be asked for information about animals receiving veterinary medicines or that have been vaccinated, for example against Johne's Disease. It is recommended that cattle are not given any medication on, or just before, the first day of the test, other than for welfare reasons.

- **Previously tested animals**

Please ensure you know if any animals have been skin tested in the previous 60 days. You will need to notify the person undertaking the test before the test starts.

- **Facilities**

1. Safe access to and good restraint of the animal is essential. You will need to provide suitable handling facilities for the cattle to be tested, such as a crush and penning system, ideally linked by a securely constructed race.



The facilities should be in good working order and appropriate for the size and breed of cattle to be tested, for example specially adapted if handling Highland or Longhorn cattle. If you do not own a crush or penning system, you should arrange to borrow or hire one; to make sure you do not compromise the biosecurity of your herd, or anyone else's, all equipment should be cleansed and disinfected before and after use

2. For the tuberculin skin test the handling facilities must enable safe and well lit access to read and record the animal's identification tag, to clip the test areas on the neck, to measure the skin thickness of the clipped areas and to inject the tuberculin.

After 72 hours the injection sites will be re-assessed and the test results recorded. All cattle that have been injected will need to be gathered and presented again so they can be identified and the skin thickness can be safely and accurately measured

3. Blood samples, if required, will normally be taken from the tail so it is important to have safe access to the rear of the cattle.

4. The Health and Safety Executive has produced a useful information sheet (Agriculture Information Sheet No 35) about suitable handling, restraint and housing of cattle:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais35.pdf>

On the day of the test:

• Gathering

To avoid delays, your cattle should be gathered in readiness for the test. If it is not possible to test all your eligible cattle on a single day, you must be able to keep them in the same, separate groups until all cattle have been tested.

• Assistance

By providing sufficient and appropriately experienced help to move groups of cattle into and through the handling facilities, the test will go more quickly with less stress to your animals and less risk of injury to all involved. Animal Health employees will not routinely help gather animals.

• Other tasks

While you have the cattle gathered you may wish to undertake other management tasks. However these should not interfere with the test. Routine veterinary medicines, such as wormers or vaccines, should only be given to animals once they have tested clear. If you are in any doubt, please consult your veterinary surgeon.

What happens if you do not present your animals safely?

If you fail to present your cattle for testing safely and the inspector considers the facilities and assistance provided to be inadequate, the test will not proceed until the issues are resolved. This could mean your test becomes overdue.

What happens if your test becomes overdue?

If your TB test becomes overdue and you are not already on restrictions, your herd will be placed under immediate movement restrictions. While under Whole Herd Restrictions, you are not permitted to move any cattle onto or off your holding. In exceptional circumstances, movement to slaughter under licence may be permitted. However, Animal Health may refuse to issue any further individual licences for animals to go direct to slaughter until the test is completed.

If you do not co-operate, Animal Health has power to carry out the test and recover the costs afterwards through civil action. This may include the cost of labour, equipment hire and administration.

Animal Health may also pass information to the relevant enforcement authorities for possible prosecution under breaches of the order. Additionally, refusal to cooperate may be considered a deliberate breach of cross compliance, resulting in a minimum 15% reduction in payments for a number of schemes, including the single payment scheme.



Further information

Since devolution, the responsibility and powers in regard to animal health legislation has meant there are significant differences in the policies regarding bovine TB in England, Wales and Scotland.

The Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government websites providing up to date detail on these policies can be accessed from the Animal Health website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth

Your local Animal Health office can provide further practical advice and guidance on bovine TB and the testing regime for your herd's location.

The legislation about presenting animals for TB testing is covered by:

The Tuberculosis (England) Order 2007

The Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010 and the Tuberculosis (Testing and Powers of Entry) (Wales) Order 2008

The Tuberculosis (Scotland) Order 2007

The legislation concerning identifying your animals is covered by:

The Cattle Identification Regulations 2007 (as amended)

The Cattle Identification (Scotland) Regulations 2007 (as amended)

The Cattle Identification (Wales) Regulations 2007 (as amended)

The above legislation is available on the website of the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI): www.opsi.gov.uk

Alternatively, copies can be ordered from The Stationery Office Ltd (TSO) via the TSO Online Bookshop, by e-mailing [customer.services@tso.co.uk](mailto:services@tso.co.uk), or by post to:

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