

Hello, I hope you are all keeping well. Many of you will have heard/received information regarding the changes that have been made to the TB testing policy for our area. I hope to shed some light on these changes in this newsletter.

It is important to say that we understand the topic of TB runs far beyond a few pages of my ramblings and requires in depth analysis and conversation, something which has been made immensely difficult over the last year and a half.

The George Farm Vets will be holding a **TB discussion group meeting** for all cattle clients on the **2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**, starting at **7pm** in **Malmesbury Town Hall** (COVID pending). Light refreshment and food will be provided.

If you are able to attend, please contact the farm office on 01666 823035 so we can gauge numbers/know how much beer and cider to buy!

### What's Changing?

Following a consultation in 2018, DEFRA announced that default 6 monthly TB surveillance testing of cattle herds with Official Tuberculosis Free status (OTF) would replace annual testing in the High Risk Area (HRA) of England.

The role out of this new policy has been delayed up until now due to reduced veterinary capacity for TB testing. A pilot study was carried out in Wales that looked at non-veterinary professional or lay TB testers. The study had promising results and means DEFRA has now formed a new category of 'Approved Tuberculin Tester' to help meet the increased testing requirements.

From July 2021 all farms in the HRA are now subject to 6 monthly whole herd tests. This means herds that complete their annual whole herd (WHT) between July and December 2021 will have their first 6 monthly herd test from January 2022 onwards. Those that complete their annual WHT between January and June 2022 will have their first six-monthly herd test from July 2022 onwards.

The testing window for your 6 monthly WHT will still be 60 days - the same window that has previously applied to annual WHT. Due to the logistical difficulties the 6 monthly WHT may cause, some flexibility is available and APHA will allow a one-off change where farms can request to bring their next testing

window forward (not back). It is vitally important therefore that you check with Emma, Val or Catherine in the farm office if we can accommodate your proposed earlier test window before you contact the APHA TB Advice Centre/DEFRA to apply for this change.

A point you may have also heard is that there will be changes to contiguous testing requirements and tracer tests. Contiguous herd testing is carried out to detect spread of infection from a TB breakdown with lesion and/or culture positive animals to neighbouring herds. It is not usually required in herds on 6 monthly WHT due to the high frequency of surveillance testing. Similarly APHA will try wherever possible to implement tracer tests as part of a farms 6 monthly WHT. It is important to note that APHA may require contiguous testing or individual/group tracer testing in some herds with 'exceptional circumstances.'

There will be no change to Approved Finishing Units (AFUs) surveillance policy, meaning they will remain on rolling 90 day WHT regardless of TB status.

### What Next?

Herds can remain on annual testing if they enrol on a Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) TB Entry Level Membership and gain CHeCS TB Herd Accreditation. The first step to gaining accreditation and remaining on annual WHT involves herds implementing at least one biosecurity option from each of the listed TB risk factors below:



 **NEW CHECS TB Entry Level Membership**  
Find out more at [www.checs.co.uk/tb](http://www.checs.co.uk/tb)

Once these initial steps have been met, full TB herd accreditation can happen if:

- A farm has been clear of TB (OTF) for at least 1 year
- A farm has introduced further risk factor control measures (as required by CHecs)

CHecs sets the standards for TB entry level membership but, as with all other disease programmes, it is administered through participating cattle health schemes and licensed and quality-controlled by CHecs.

A declaration must be submitted to a farms cattle health scheme and can only be completed by a cattle farmer and a BCVA Accredited TB Veterinary Adviser (BATVA). **The George farm team will soon be fully trained as BATVAs to provide this service.**

#### What Else?

APHA hope that increasing the frequency with which we use the skin test will enable TB-infected herds to be identified sooner, thus reducing the risk of TB being spread.

This may sound useful in theory but I would argue that the current policy for farms once a reactor has been identified is still woefully inadequate.

In many instances, the least appropriate tests are used in an attempt to clear infection from a herd. This poor application often means the right test is not used at the right time. This fuels a cycle where farms either find themselves falling in and out of OTF status or simply remaining under restrictions with little hope of going clear.

The momentum that had been building through regular meetings with APHA, NFU and cull companies pre-pandemic has slowed over the last year and a half. As COVID measures are relaxed, we hope to hold a number of TB Discussion Group Meetings to try and generate discussion and debate that will ultimately help provide meaningful conclusions and suggestions that can be put to local government and APHA officials.

I hope this has provided answers to some of your questions and I look forward to seeing you all soon!

**Many thanks, Ben**



#### Upcoming Meetings:

### Maximizing Milk From Forage

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 7.30pm, Lyegrove Farm  
GL9 1HA

### TB Discussion Group Meeting

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 7pm, Malmesbury  
Town Hall

**If you wish to attend a meeting please contact the farm office on 01666 823035**

## Cultivate

Continued Professional Development

Practical on-farm learning for a sustainable future

Cultivate CPD has been created due to the demand we have seen from within the veterinary and farming industries for quality training, provided by companies and people who are actually implementing the things they teach on a day-to-day basis. The George Farm Vets has a long and successful history of practical education. Cultivate CPD also allows us to make the most of the skills we have within our team and to positively affect the health and welfare of the animals by improving the skills of the vets and farmers looking after them.



Cultivate CPD hosted its first course yesterday on sustainability which attracted Vets from across the country. Kat and Ed led both a morning session on the principles before taking the Vets out on farm in the afternoon to apply their learning from the morning.



Our Vet-led courses will be aimed at providing events and on-farm learning for Vets, farmers and all allied professionals.

Future courses will be advertised on CultivateCPD.co.uk (our website)

And the social pages are already alive with content.



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