

## Controlling the controllable

November 2020

Hello all, for this month's newsletter I would like to cover some aspects of TB control that are not often seen in the headlines or news articles.

Previously mentioned by Chris in his July newsletter, significant gains have been made in reducing the new infection rate of herds with regards to TB. This is thanks to the unfaltering dedication and hard work the farming community has shown in organizing, coordinating and investing in their local area culls. Many farms have also implemented further wildlife control policies:

- Raising feed and water troughs to >1m high with a sheer edge
- Fencing off setts and latrines to cattle
- Preventing badger access to stored forage and feeds
- Installing wildlife cameras to monitor levels of activity across different areas of the farm
- The list goes on!

Addressing the risk posed by wildlife should continue to be a vital part of the UK's TB control policy but this alone will not provide the complete solution. We believe further emphasis should be put on addressing cow to cow transmission. Unfortunately, this piece of the puzzle is where current government TB testing policy lets us down. The poor sensitivity of the skin test means many infected individuals are left on farm undetected. Likewise, the Interferon-gamma blood test shows good levels of accuracy when used in herds where a genuinely new infection has been found on a previously clear farm, but it is unclear how effective the test is at identifying infected cattle on chronically infected farms. Cattle that go undetected are known as 'anergic' and are often the silent majority when it comes to spread of disease on farm. Chris discussed the use of the Enferplex blood test as a significantly more accurate test in comparison with skin and gamma. Due to a number of factors APHA are reluctant, at least for the time being, to grant regular access to implement further testing strategies with Enferplex on farm.

### So, what can we do?

Unfortunately, there is no single measure that will reduce the risk of TB to zero, but each control measure you implement represents being one step closer to protecting your herd.

Listed below are a number of control measures related to cow to cow transmission. I often find many farms have already applied a number of these when discussing TB control:

#### MINIMISE infection from cattle manure

- Store manure for a long period before spreading on farm.
- Only spread manure on arable land or pasture that is not going to be grazed by cattle for at least two months.
- Minimise aerosols and contamination of roadways when spreading.
- Don't spread manure from other farms.

If an infected cow is shedding TB, 1 gram of faeces can contain up to 1000 infective units (an adult dairy cow produces 50kg/day) TB can survive in slurry for up to six months and has a survival time on pasture of up to two months (four months in winter)

#### REDUCE risk from neighbouring herds

- Check local TB outbreaks data online at [www.ibtb.co.uk](http://www.ibtb.co.uk)
- Put in place effective barriers between neighbouring herds.
- Avoid sharing equipment or vehicles with other farms.
- Avoid sharing cattle grazing with other herds.

A common finding during TB Advice (TBAS) visits is that many farms have equipment and machinery that is shared. If infectious material is present this can be an easy route for the TB to spread between separate holdings.

#### STOP infected cattle entering the herd

- Ask for TB history information before you buy new cattle.
- Post-movement test cattle entering the herd.
- Isolate all higher-risk cattle before they enter the herd.

If a farm has had a breakdown in the last 2 – 4 years, there is a risk that TB may still be in the herd despite being officially clear (use <http://www.ibtb.co.uk> to check)

## Identifying risky individuals (cows not people!)

Despite the skin test missing some infected cows we can still use information from the test to produce a **Bovine Reaction Report** that helps identify them:

Cattle that have **tested clear despite bottom lump measurements  $\geq 4\text{mm}$  on two or more skin tests in the last two years** are classed as **moderate TB risk** animals.



Once identified it is important that these animals are managed appropriately to help reduce and contain the risk they may pose to the remaining herd.

Ideally, we would carry out targeted testing on these cows with the Enferplex blood test but as we know, this is tricky due to current APHA policy. Whether Enferplex testing is granted or not, the following measures can still be taken with moderate risk cattle:

- Breed to beef
- Snatch calve
- Avoid feeding colostrum or milk
- Separate housing with separate slurry management
- Milk last to avoid parlour contamination
- Cull

You may notice that some of these measures are similar to what you might find in your Johnes control plan. This is an important comparison because TB and Johnes are part of the same family of bacteria and act in a similar way.

**Please contact the office if you would like us to produce a Bovine Reaction Report for you to use as part of your TB control plan.**

TB dominates all our lives as it continues to cause devastating emotional and financial strain. It is so important we continue to do everything possible to control what we can. By identifying the specific risks you have on your farm, there are many opportunities to make small gains that will collectively make a big difference. **TBAS visits are still completely free and if you feel you would benefit from one please do contact the office to book in a slot.**



*We moved to All Canning's in 2018 to manage the dairy herd at Manor Farm.*

*On the 1st February this year, with the support from Mr Curnick and Mr & Mrs Butler for whom we manage the herd, we launched our fresh milk vending machine.*

*We've thought about installing a milk vending machine for a number of years with the aim of making fresh milk directly accessible to our local community and also to try and bridge the gap between the public and farm.*

*Our milk vending machine cuts out the middle man, offers a much more environmentally friendly, sustainable option for customers to purchase milk whilst also reducing their plastic waste.*

*We've been completely overwhelmed with the response the Milk Hut has had both locally and nationally and demand has certainly kept us very busy over the last 9 months.*

*It's given us a chance to actually talk to people about the cows, how their milk is produced and also what our farming life entails. Knowledge is key and people love to hear and see us on social media going about our normal routine. It makes a huge difference being able to talk to customers rather than just watching the tanker disappear into the distance.*

*Mat & Chrissie*

**Moo2Yoo**



Wishing you all the best,

**Ben**

  
**TBAS**  
TB ADVISORY SERVICE