

Q&A – 2010 Parish Testing Interval Review England

Q1. What is the new approach for calculating PTIs?

A. Since 2005, Animal Health have calculated the routine TB testing frequencies to be applied in GB the following year by identifying the percentage of cattle herds infected within a parish over the previous 6-year period, and also by taking into account the length of each breakdown. All TB breakdowns with visibly lesioned and/or culture positive reactors are included in this calculation regardless of their origin. This approach is therefore based very much on the historical incidence of TB in each parish.

The approach in 2010 is still based on the calculation used in previous years, however, in addition, Defra and Animal Health have applied general veterinary knowledge about the epidemiology of TB in GB to “smooth out” any inconsistencies and come up with a more coherent TB surveillance picture. This assessment was also based on a range of recent TB epidemiological data.

The approach being applied in 2010 is however an interim measure, for a long term solution, the TB Eradication Group (TBEG) have agreed that further work should be carried out to develop a more proactive approach whereby TB testing frequencies are set on the basis of the local epidemiological risk. More information can be found in *Interim approach to setting routine TB testing intervals in 2010* Policy document for England [attached](#).

Q2. Why has this approach been introduced?

A. The TB Eradication Group (TBEG) whose members include representatives from Animal Health and Defra, the farming industry, as well as the veterinary profession, identified a number of problems with the traditional PTI approach:

- Until now, the calculation of TB testing intervals was based on the historical incidence of TB in each Animal Health parish. By its very nature, this calculation was “reactive” and, in some areas of expanding or emerging TB incidence, this trailed the spread of infection. The interim approach is more proactive and looks to get ahead of the advancing front of infection in the high incidence areas.
- Additionally, parishes are not always the most suitable geographical unit on which to assess herd incidence and, therefore, set testing frequencies of TB due to their small size, the number of herds or awkward shape of the parish. The previous approach, despite the application of local veterinary discretion, had resulted in a “patchwork” of parishes with different testing intervals across parts of GB. In some cases, this led to annual and 4-yearly parishes next to each other. The interim approach looks to address this and develop a more coherent distribution of testing intervals across England that is consistent with the risk and the epidemiology of bovine TB in each region.

Q3. Who made the decision to introduce these arrangements?

A. The approach was one of several options worked out by Defra officials (in discussion with Animal Health) and presented to the TB Eradication Group (TBEG) for their evaluation. TBEG then recommended the chosen option to Ministers, as set out in their progress report of 8th October. Defra Ministers made the decision to introduce the interim arrangements.

Q4. Will I still be notified of my parish testing interval and herd testing interval the same way as in previous years?

A. Yes, a statement letter detailing your PTI and HTI will be sent to you in November.

Q5. Is Defra going to change the approach to setting routine testing intervals again in a few years, or is this a long-term policy?

A. It is intended that the mechanism for setting Parish Testing Intervals in 2010 will be an interim solution until a new, more permanent policy is developed by Defra in conjunction with TBEG and agreed with Ministers over the coming months. This is likely to take some time – TBEG will be looking into this and will announce any recommendations when available.

Q6. I've already received a test notification letter which has a different testing interval stated to the interval I have previously been on. Why is this?

A. Animal Health is currently in the process of carrying out the PTI review and as a result, has started to change PTIs and HTIs on our IT system. Herd owners who are due a test during the early part of 2010 may therefore receive a test notification letter which contains details of their new HTI. This is because these letters are generated automatically and take the most up to date HTI information from directly from the IT system. You will however still receive your PTI statement, which will be issued in November.

Q7. What is happening with the TB testing frequencies for cattle herds in Wales and Scotland?

A. As Animal Health and Welfare policy is devolved, the situation in the rest of GB is different. In Scotland, despite having recently achieved Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) regional status within the UK, routine 4-yearly testing will be retained for the time being in order to provide a minimum level of surveillance against sporadic TB incursions. By contrast, the Welsh Assembly Government has decided that all of Wales will require annual TB testing in 2010. Future testing frequencies from 2011 onwards will be decided following further analysis of the Health Check Wales results. The Welsh Assembly Government will not be returning to calculating testing frequency on a parish level.

Q8. Will the local Animal Health offices still retain the discretion to alter the testing interval during the year?

A. Yes, but only to increase the testing frequency, e.g. in response to an unexpected rise in the number of TB breakdowns in a low incidence parish.

Q9. From looking at the map, I think I may now be in a 12/24 month testing area, when do I need to start pre-movement testing?

A. The new PTIs will come into force on 1st January 2010 and you will receive your PTI notification letter in November which will confirm what your Parish and Herd testing interval will be from that date. All cattle over 42 days old moving out of a 1 or 2 yearly tested **herd** must have tested negative to a TB test within 60 days prior to the movement. There are some exemptions from pre-movement testing, if you believe you may fall under one of the exemptions, or would like to find out what the exemptions are, please check the [movement page](#) of the TB section of the Animal Health website or contact your local Animal Health office.

Q10. Is this new system compatible with EU TB legislation?

A. Yes. The EU Directive indicates that routine TB testing intervals should be set for designated areas but does not specify what that area should be. It is for the member state (in this case devolved to England) to decide on the area used.

The new mechanism for setting routine TB testing intervals in 2010 has been discussed with the EU Commission officials, who were content with the proposals.

Q11. What if my OV cannot complete my test on time or carry out my pre-movement test?

A. Animal Health Regional Veterinary Leads are working closely with Official Veterinarians to inform them of the new testing requirements in order that they can be planned for. If you encounter any problems in arranging a test, please let Animal Health know by contacting your local office.

Questions relating to annual testing counties in the South West & Midlands:

Q12. I was previously on 24/36/48 month testing and now my entire county is on annual testing, why is this?

A. In the South West and the West of England, TB incidence levels are ever increasing, and areas where the frequency of TB testing is low (i.e. 3 or 4 yearly), are rapidly being encroached upon. Putting entire counties in the West and South West of England on annual testing is a better reflection of the overall TB risk situation in those counties and will help us to get ahead of the disease and control the spread.

Q13. Why in Eastern parts of the country are there annual parishes bordering 4 yearly parishes but yet my whole county is on annual testing?

A. Incidents of TB in the East of the country are less likely to be due to spread caused by wildlife and are more likely to be due to movements of cattle (i.e. purchased infection). Having 4 yearly testing areas directly next to annual testing areas in this part of the country does not pose the same risk as in high incidence areas in the West and South West of the country.

Q14. Why are other counties nearby not also on annual testing?

A. TB incidence in the counties bordering counties in the South West and West of the country is lower, therefore placing these counties on annual testing would be a disproportionate reaction in those areas. However these counties need to act as a 'buffer' between the high TB incidence counties and the low TB incidence counties to the north and east and, therefore, the counties bordering those in the West and South West have a 'belt' of parishes, which are on 2 yearly testing (with some parishes also on one yearly testing where appropriate).

Counties bordering the Midlands and the South West – the 'buffer zone':

Q15. Why are many of the parishes surrounding me on 24 month testing & I'm on annual testing?

A. In most cases this will be because your parish must have experienced a number of TB breakdowns in recent years that raise the herd incidence of TB above the 1% threshold (EU Directive 64/432/EEC requires that annual testing is applied where the incidence of TB in a given area is equal to or greater than 1%).

In addition, sometimes parishes are placed on annual testing based on veterinary evidence that this is appropriate due to knowledge of the TB situation in the local area.

Q16. Why am I on 24 month testing, but am next door to another parish which is on 48 month testing?

A. Because your herd is in the 2-year buffer zone separating the counties in the West and Southwest of England from the low incidence areas in the North and East.

Counties in the rest of the North and East of England:

Q17. Why am I on 24/12 month testing when I was previously on less frequent testing?

A. In most cases this will be because your parish must have experienced a number of TB breakdowns in recent years that raise the herd incidence of TB above the 1% threshold (EU Directive 64/432/EEC requires that annual testing is applied where the

incidence of TB in a given area is equal to or greater than 1%). In addition, sometimes parishes are placed on annual testing based on veterinary evidence that this is appropriate due to knowledge of the TB situation in the local area.

Q18. How long will I be on 12/24 month testing?

A. For isolated parishes on 12/24 month testing in low incidence areas of the north and east of England, which are due to TB breakdowns caused by purchases of infected cattle, Defra and TBEG will be assessing new criteria for them to revert to the background 4-yearly interval as soon as possible.