

Circulation: NFU Members

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NFU Summary – Defra Bovine TB Consultation Response: 27 May 2021

note – this document is a summarised version of the Defra Consultation Response, to enable an overview for members

Defra Consultation Response – NFU Summary

Introduction

On 27 May, Defra released their bTB consultation response, which included a summary of responses to the proposals. The consultation ran for eight weeks, from 27 January 2021 to 24 March 2021. The NFU will summarise the key outcomes below.

Response Outcomes

Post-Movement Testing in the Annual Parts of the Edge Area

- The government remains in favour of extending mandatory post-movement testing of cattle moving from higher TB risk regions of Great Britain into those parts of the Edge Area where herds are on annual surveillance testing. Defra does not wish to set a date for implementation but have committed to weighing up evidence gathered through the call for views process to help assess alternatives, more sensitive test options for post-movement testing and inform next steps. Defra has also committed to review the supporting Regulatory Triage Assessment.

Adapting the criteria for Gamma testing for TB breakdowns in the HRA and six-monthly testing Edge Area counties that occur within 18 months of the herd regaining TB free status following a previous OTFW breakdown

- The government intends to revise the current policy for the use of the IFN- γ test in the HRA and Edge Area, so that use of the test becomes mandatory for TB breakdowns in the HRA and six-monthly testing Edge Area counties, that occur within 18 months of the herd regaining TB free status following a previous OTFW breakdown. Defra will consider whether further analysis on the use of the IFN- γ test should be carried out. If necessary, further adjustments to the criteria for its use may be proposed in a future consultation exercise.

Wildlife Control Proposals

- New Badger Disease Control (intensive cull) licences will cease to be issued after 2022.
- New Badger Disease Control (intensive cull) licences issued in 2021 and 2022, could, after a minimum of two years of culling, be revoked after a progress evaluation by the CVO. In practice, this evaluation could take place after two or three years of culling.

- The initial financial commitments for companies to apply for a Badger Disease Control licence will remain at four years' worth of funding. However, the 25% contingency requirement will be removed.
- Supplementary Badger Culling will be limited to a maximum of two years, and the issuing of SBC licences for previously licensed areas or areas licensed for Badger Disease Control after 2020 will be prohibited.

Additional Points of Note

- The government also agreed with the recommendation of Natural England that it is important to maintain surveillance of the badger population in areas that have completed culling. Defra has therefore committed to developing a monitoring system to track the badger population and disease in badgers in former culling areas to monitor trends and publish this data.

This commitment goes in tandem with comments made within the initial Defra consultation, which stated:

'Culling would remain an option where epidemiological assessment indicates that it is needed'.

- The government anticipates that any remaining areas located where there is a significant reservoir of infection in badgers and that wish to undertake culling for the purposes of tackling bovine TB, will come forward to apply for a licence by 2022. Defra believes that the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions will not prevent the remaining areas from applying for a badger disease control licence by the 2022 application deadline. However, Natural England recommended that, if applications are not permitted for a further year (until 2023), the annual default maximum of ten new Badger Disease Control licences should be removed from the Guidance (Annex D in the consultation document). Defra confirms that this policy remains under continual review. Any exercise to review this maximum limit will also consider the impact that COVID19 related restrictions have had on the ability to meet NE's licensing criteria.

Please note – This is an NFU summary of the full Defra consultation response. The full details of the consultation response, including annexed items and the full proposals, are available here: [Bovine tuberculosis: consultation on proposals to help eradicate the disease in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/bovine-tuberculosis-consultation-on-proposals-to-help-eradicate-the-disease-in-england)

