

BEING PREPARED FOR TB

Sarah Tomlinson, Westpoint Vets

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Bovine TB is a devastating disease for a farm business but also for the farm team, whether that is paid employees or family.

I work for the TB Advisory Service (TBAS) and part of my role is to help farmers reduce the impact a TB breakdown can have on not just the farm business but the anxiety and stress of all involved.

By making a plan the impacts TB can have will hopefully be reduced.

Start by identifying which parts of your business would be affected by a breakdown. No stock can move off or on till you have completed your first short interval test, unless to slaughter.

If you were planning on selling stock to pay some bills how would you manage? Maybe you have stock away from home that need to come back to calve?

There are options, it may mean accepting less money for the calves and stores if you sell them to an Approved Finishing Unit (AFU). Could you rear them on and finish them yourself? What impact would that have on your cash flow?

Have you got sheds or grazing off farm? Would a Temporary Land Association (TLA) be useful?

- These allow two units within 10 miles to act as one, no pre-movement testing between them, but if one unit is shut down both are.
- Alternatively, a Temporary CPH (TCPH) would mean two units becoming separate epidemiological herds, you would need to pre-movement test between them but if one was shut down the other one would still be able to trade.
- TLAs make sense for stock that would need to return to the main holding.
- TCPH make sense for stock that would ultimately leave for growing on or breeding somewhere else.



Sarah Tomlinson, farm Vet from Derbyshire & Technical Director for the TB Advisory Service

Perhaps an isolation unit would be useful?

- A separate facility that stock can be moved into should a breakdown occur.
- It has to be filled in a six-week period but if the animals pass two consecutive short interval tests irrespective of the original herd, they can be sold on as TB free.

All these things will take time and perhaps some physical changes, licences need to be applied for, so thinking about a TB breakdown before it happens may just make it a little less disastrous as it could have been.



TBAS
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One dairy farmer in Leicestershire who has had some inconclusive reactors in the last year said:

“The TBAS advisor made us face head on the impacts TB could have on our business as we would normally sell all non-replacement heifer calves under 42 days.

We have sat down as a farm team and discussed our options, which were explained to us at the visit. We have now taken on extra shed space on a Temporary Land Association, where we can put heifers in the winter but should the worse happen we can use the extra space to house weaned calves, before they can be sold to a local Approved Finishing Unit at six months of age.

TBAS encouraged us to find out about local AFUs and orange markets, prices paid and ages they would take calves.

Just by knowing our options has really taken some of the stress and anxiety out of the TB test. I would still be devastated by a breakdown, but the business has a plan.”