



Verderers of the New Forest TB Control Plan Amended June 2021

THE LICENCE

On the basis of the implementation of the TB Control Plan as outlined in this document, APHA (Animal and Plant Health Agency) has issued a licence to allow an exemption from pre-movement testing (PRMT) requirements for forest cattle movements on to and off the Forest from 30 June 2014.

This licence has been issued on a blanket basis to all common graziers as listed in the Verderers of the New Forest Marking Fee Register i.e. for those cattle which have been marked by an Agister (Covid restrictions permitting) and for which a marking fee has been received by the Verderers.

The conditions of the licence are as follows:

1. This licence may be used for daily and seasonal movements of cattle to and from the common grazing land of the New Forest and the home premises, without the need to test at every movement, providing that such movements are recorded and fully comply with the Verderers By-Laws and the criteria included in the TB Control Plan.
2. During movements on and off the common grazing land, cattle moving under this licence must not be allowed to come into contact with any other cattle of a different health status.
3. This licence is issued to the Verderers of the New Forest, which is the owner of the TB Control Plan. The keeper of the cattle being moved is responsible for compliance with the conditions of the licence and this licence may be amended, suspended or revoked, in writing, at any time.
4. The keeper shall, on demand by a Veterinary Inspector, an Officer of the Department or by an Inspector of the Local Authority or by a member of a police force, furnish his/her name and address and shall produce a copy of this licence and allow it to be copied.
5. This licence may not be used to move animals from premises subject to bovine TB restrictions or restricted for any other animal disease.

Introduction

Defra announced that, from 30th June 2014, all cattle over 42 days old moving to and from common land in annual testing areas in England must be pre-movement tested for TB.

There are now no exceptions from a pre-movement test prior to stocking the common and a pre-movement test is required for all cattle that will be moving on to the common for the first time after a period when the cattle have been in on the holding.

The previous general exemption from the requirement for pre-movement testing of cattle returning from common grazing also ceased.

However, for movements back from commons, when cattle are taken into the holding for long periods e.g. for winter, in place of pre-movement testing, commoners will be allowed instead to carry out a post-movement test between 60 and 120 days after they return. These returning cattle should be isolated from other cattle which are not part of the holding's Forest herd on the home premises until the post-movement test has been completed with clear results.

This pre-movement testing exemption and permission to post movement-test reflects the fact that in most situations, TB testing on common land is impractical and dangerous and is not permitted by the VGS rules.

Cattle that move onto and off the Forest on a daily basis therefore presented a specific problem and so the Verderers, on behalf of the New Forest commoners, applied to APHA for an exemption to pre-movement testing such cattle. After careful consideration a licence has been issued to the Verderers allowing the exemption, but it is subject to all commoners adhering to this TB Control Plan.

If a cattle grazier is not part of this TB Control Plan, this exemption will not apply to him or her.

Whilst the detail of this TB Control Plan is not subject to Cross Compliance rules, complying with TB testing regimes are subject to Cross Compliance rules

It is important to note that plan covers only the steps to be taken to permit an exemption from the need to pre-movement test; there are no exemptions to the actions required for the control of TB breakdown once suspicion of TB infection has been identified, and the actions taken will follow the established TB disease control procedures. APHA will require that all cattle from the TB affected holding are placed under TB restrictions and removed from the common, so as to minimise the risk of disease transmission and not further endanger other herds and wildlife sharing the grazing. It remains the responsibility of the keeper to ensure that adequate housing, feed and water is available for these restricted cattle.

This plan outlines the steps required to reduce the likelihood of cattle grazing the New Forest being infected with TB from elsewhere and becoming a source of spread of TB both within the Forest, and to holdings outside the Forest.

The risk posed to the Forest by bovine TB is illustrated by several TB reactors on holdings exercising rights of Common on the Forest in recent years.

Objectives

The objectives of this TB Control Plan are:

To allow a licence to be issued to permit movements onto and off the Forest without the requirement to pre or post movement test

1. To reduce the likelihood of introducing TB-infected animals to the Forest.
2. In the event that TB is introduced, to reduce the impact of TB within the Forest by better understanding which areas of the Forest the cattle graze and other factors that will affect the potential for spread.
3. To provide information to help manage a breakdown on the Forest.
4. To communicate a workable plan to all interested parties in the Forest so that all livestock are controlled in a uniform way, with no misunderstandings.

Implementation

The principle underpinning this plan is to (1) test to ensure that the Forest herd is free of TB and (2) then give the entire Forest herd a "hard outer shell". The 'hard outer shell' is not a physical/geographical barrier but measures put in place to try to prevent the entry of TB infection into the cattle of the Forest Herd. This is the same principle that is also used for reducing disease spread for the purpose of international and EU trade between countries and regions. (1) was completed in 2014/2015. (2) is ongoing.

The hard outer shell can only be achieved by closely observing the rules contained in this TB Plan and maintaining a high health status herd. In order to do that, before cattle are brought in to the Forest herd, they must be isolated and not allowed to have any contact with other cattle of unknown disease status, or the rest of the herd, until they have been tested for TB, and the test results are clear. Only after these new cattle have tested clear of TB can they be allowed to mix with the other cattle.

It is intended that it should be difficult for cattle to get through the hard outer shell onto the farm, but once the brought-in cattle have tested clear, they are allowed to mix freely.

In the New Forest, the hard outer shell is implemented as follows:

1. Before they are allowed to mix with the Forest herd (including those on the home premises), all cattle that are brought in from outside the Forest will be required to be isolated for 60 days after they arrive on the home premises, and then post-movement tested. 60 days' isolation is required to ensure that any cattle that may have been infected after being pre-movement tested clear on the farm of origin, have time to develop TB sufficiently to react to the post-movement TB skin test. Isolation is defined later in this plan.
2. All cattle within the hard outer shell (the New Forest herd) will be considered to be of the same disease status and will be able to move freely but may only return to the holding from which they were turned out. The hard outer shell will in most cases include the home premises, and cattle that are exempt from the pre-movement testing requirement must not at any time be mixed with, nor have contact on the home premises with other cattle that have a lower or unknown disease status.
3. All Forest cattle must be tested annually between 1st October and 28th February.

The objective of this approach is for the New Forest to become Fortress Forest of known, low-risk TB disease status, with a hard outer shell.

Management of holdings grazing the New Forest

Although individual cattle are unlikely to graze all areas of the Forest, and mix with cattle from all the other holdings, there are no reliable physical boundaries, or other practical ways of limiting their movements under normal conditions. Therefore, it is pragmatic to assume that the New Forest operates as one freely-mixing common grazing area.

In terms of TB disease control, within the perambulation there are five types of farm businesses using the land.

1. Holdings that are within the Perambulation, or contiguous with it, and access the Forest directly through a gate so that the cattle can move freely to and from the holding:

Cattle on these holdings will:

- a) Be exempt from the requirement to have a valid pre-movement test for movements to and from the Forest and your holding.
- b) Have to have an annual whole herd TB test during the winter period, defined as 1st October to 28th February inclusive.

2. Holdings that sit immediately outside the perambulation, within one mile, where the cattle can access the Forest on foot (or by trailer or lorry as described for safety / bio-security reasons):

Cattle on these holdings will be considered to be the same as cattle on holdings that are within the perambulation, or are contiguous with the perambulation and will have the same requirements (as per 1 above).

3. Holdings comprising several parcels of land, where all are covered by one or more holding numbers and at least one part of the holding is more than one mile from the perambulation, but which have grazing within the perambulation, or contiguous to it.

These are the highest risk and most complicated cases and will have to be individually risk-assessed by AHVLA to determine if a pre-movement testing exemption is possible. Factors that will determine this decision will include, for example:

- a) The previous testing history of all parts of the holding.
- b) The TB breakdown history of surrounding holdings.
- c) The cattle purchasing practices on the holding.
- d) The degree of dispersal of the land parcels and their location.
- e) Other husbandry practices.

4. Holdings where the nearest point of land is more than one mile from the perambulation:

No pre-movement testing exemption is possible for cattle on these holdings, they will be required to:

- a) Have an annual whole herd test during the winter period off the Forest.
- b) Have a valid pre-movement test for all movements on and off the Forest.

- c) For movements off the Forest it will be acceptable to:
- i. Post-movement test on the home premises within 120 days, but the cattle must be kept isolated until a clear result is obtained.
 - ii. Move directly from the Forest to slaughter without pre-movement testing.
5. **Holdings where the land is geographically within the perambulation, or is contiguous with it, but the occupiers do not turn out on to the Forest. *Cattle on these holdings fall outside the scope of this plan and are subject to national rules regarding PRMT***

General requirements for all holdings that graze the New Forest

1. All cattle that graze the Forest must be from a premises whose current status is officially TB free. It should be noted that if a herd is not tested within the APHA scheduled window and the test becomes overdue then the herd loses its TB free status.
2. Cattle that are within the Forest herd (including Forest Bulls) must not be allowed to mix with cattle of a lower, or undetermined, disease status e.g. cattle that have been recently purchased and are awaiting post-movement testing.
3. All cattle grazing the Forest must have a valid annual TB test carried out on their home premises during the defined winter period (1st October to 28th February), or have followed the testing and isolation requirements for joining the Forest herd. There is no exemption to this requirement.

Responsibilities of those grazing the Forest

1. It is the responsibility of individual Commoners who have cattle to ensure that their cattle are correctly tested before turning out onto the Forest.
2. Failure to comply or to keep adequate records will result in immediate suspension of the pre-movement testing exemption for that Commoner.
3. When being asked to mark cattle at the same time as the TB test, the Agister will, if at all possible, attend at the second visit to ensure that the test result is known.
4. For the purpose of ensuring compliance with the New Forest TB Control Plan, the Verderers and the Agisters reserve the right to inspect farm records e.g. movement books/BCMS records and cattle passports upon request.
5. The Verderers will insert the TB Control Plan into the Verderers' Grazing Scheme rules and any cattle commoner who fails to comply, and thus jeopardises the TB disease status of the Forest, will be penalised under that scheme.
6. It is important to note that the New Forest TB Control Plan itself is not subject to Cross-Compliance rules, however, complying with TB testing regimes is, and failure to pre or post-movement test as required may impact payments both from the VGS and the BPS or any successor scheme.
7. It is possible for the Licence to be revoked in respect of all herds on the Forest if any commoner fails to abide by the New Forest TB Control Plan.
8. The effectiveness of the plan relies on everyone maintaining the hard outer shell. If individuals bring high risk or infected cattle into the Forest and introduce TB, it may result in much tighter TB controls.

9. The Verderers' Office must be advised immediately if a reactor is confirmed in the Forest herd or if they are subject to restrictions as a result of the herd becoming overdue for its TB test. Inconclusive results must be advised within 7 working days. Reactors and Inconclusive reactors (IRs) should be isolated until removed for slaughter or in the case of IRs resolved by a re-test. Isolation is defined below. The provisions of the Data Protection Act will be adhered to at all times and the precise identification of the commoner/herd with the reactor/inconclusive will not be divulged. The area affected will, however, be openly identified in order to try to reduce cattle movements which could result in a spread of disease.

Definition of Isolation

The definition of 'isolation' is:- Animals must be kept at least 3m from other animals. They must not be able to touch noses with other cattle. They must not share water troughs, feed troughs or associated equipment. Slurry from one group of animals must not be allowed to come into contact with other animals on the holding/land. If the isolation is in part of a building, then the dividing wall must go right up to the roof - so no joint air space. However it has been agreed that the high wall could be built with bales of straw. Good biosecurity is essential; eg use different boots and equipment or thoroughly disinfect when moving between groups of cattle of different disease status. Cattle isolated at pasture should be double fenced to ensure a 3 metre barrier between them and any other cattle. This can be by the addition of an electric fence within the current fencing.

Management of Cattle with inconclusive TB test results

This depends on the herd's TB history and can be complicated – if the herd's TB free status has not been withdrawn in the previous three years, restrictions will only be applied to the inconclusive animal and only the inconclusive animal will have to be kept off the Forest and away from the Forest herd.

The IR will then have to be retested at least 60 days after the initial IR test). If this second test is clear it must comply with resolved IR testing protocol of a negative gamma blood test before it can leave the home premises

If it remains an IR it becomes a reactor it will be sent for slaughter and herd restrictions will then be applied and testing will be required.

If TB has been confirmed or an IR found within the previous 3 years then additional restrictions will apply to the herd immediately an IR is disclosed – when this happens a discussion must take place with the APHA case Veterinary Surgeon.

Management of TB reactors

1. The New Forest TB Control Plan describes only the risk mitigation steps necessary to justifying exemption from the requirement to pre-movement test cattle movements both on and off the Forest for daily movements. It does not affect the management of TB reactors.
2. All reactor herds and tracings will be treated as per the normal national procedure for TB reactors in the Edge Area.

Management of Hire bulls

All hire bulls and bulls that move between herds, must be pre-movement tested unless he has been tested in the previous 60 days.

However, it should be noted that upon initial entry to a Forest herd as defined, the standard 60 day from arrival to that herd and post-movement testing requirement will apply to the bull i.e. the bull must remain isolated from the Forest cattle herd for 60 days, and achieve a clear post-movement test before it can mix with the Forest cattle.

It should also be noted that if a bull moves between a Forest herd as defined, and a non-Forest herd, even if within the perambulation the 60 day isolation and post movement test requirement will re-apply if it is subsequently moved back to a Forest herd.

Examples of bull movements and the actions required are described below:

Type of bull movement	Actions required
Bull from out of the area to a Forest herd or from a herd within the perambulation but which is not part of the New Forest TB control plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 day isolation • Clear post-movement test before integration.
Bull from Forest herd to another Forest herd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No isolation requirement • But Standard Regulations apply ie PRMT •
Bull from a Forest herd to a non-Forest herd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard Regulations apply ie PRMT • No isolation requirements.

Owners of bulls which are shared or hired between Commoners involved in this TB Plan will be required to be registered on an annual basis. Any additional bulls purchased through the year must be notified to the clerk to the verderers within 14 days. Owners of bulls will be required to sign a declaration to confirm that they will abide by the requirements of the TB plan in regard to each bull as shown above.

Transferring animals between Forest herds

Animals which are being transferred to a herd with a different CPH number must be pre-movement tested.

Calves

Young calves have been shown to be able to transmit TB that is only detected months or years later. If a young calf is introduced to a cow who has maybe lost her own calf, and the calf came from outside the hard outer shell, even though it is under 42 days old, the calf and cow must be isolated on the holding with no contact with the Forest herd. Both must then be post movement tested more than 60 days after the calf arrived on the farm, before they are allowed to join the Forest herd.

Calves over 42 days of age must be tested for TB in accordance with the plan.

Amended
22/6/2021