Co. Monaghan Bovine TB Update

August 2018

This leaflet is intended to provide herdowners in Co. Monaghan with an update on the bovine TB situation and on how you can reduce the risk of your cattle getting infected. It is part of the Department’s efforts to address the high levels of TB in Co. Monaghan through additional measures, including communicating with farmers on these key points:

- The national TB situation
- The TB situation in Co. Monaghan
- What farmers can do to reduce the TB risk to their cattle

National Bovine TB Situation:

- As of July 30th, national herd incidence for TB stood at 3.05%, marginally down on the same period last year. This means that since the beginning of this year, 3.05% of all herds tested for TB have experienced a new breakdown, i.e., they have had at least 1 animal that tested positive for TB.

- Although herd incidence so far in 2018 is similar to 2017, the number of reactors identified to date in 2018 has increased by 1,065 (over 13%). This is a direct result of more reactors being identified through gamma interferon (GIF) testing. GIF testing is able to identify TB infection at an earlier stage than the skin (SICCT) test which is used for the annual round test. Therefore, when used appropriately, GIF testing can reduce the chances of leaving residual infection in a herd after de-restriction. In the short-term, we expect that this policy will increase the number of reactors but in the medium term, we expect by removing more infected cattle the risk of re-infection will fall.

- Over the last 10 years herd incidence has fallen from just over 6% in 2007, and reactor numbers have fallen from over 27,700 to just over 17,000. This level of progress would not be possible without excellent cooperation between farmers, Private Veterinary Practitioners and Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine officials.
The map shows the number of new TB herd restrictions in each area of Ireland in the 12 months to June 2018.

The chart below shows the number of herds tested and the TB herd incidence nationally in 2017 and for 2018 up to July.
Update on the TB situation in Monaghan

- Monaghan has a herd incidence of 6.13%. This means that since the beginning of 2018 6.13% of all herds tested for TB have experienced a new breakdown, i.e., they have had at least 1 animal that tested positive for TB. This is over twice the national average.

- There are 4,259 herds in Monaghan and 64% (2,726) of them have been tested so far this year. There have been 990 reactors in Monaghan to the end of July 2018. Reactors per 1000 tests stands at 5.12 in the region in comparison with a national average of 1.87.

- As in other counties, badgers are believed to contribute to the persistence of TB in Monaghan. A vaccination trial programme has been in operation in the County since 2012 and is creating a population of badgers which are immunologically protected against TB infection and therefore reduce the risk to cattle.

- The rise in the TB incidence in Monaghan is multi-factorial and will require a range of measures to address the issue. The Department has devised a tailored programme for Monaghan following consultation with staff in the local office and stakeholders in the area. This represents a coordinated, rigorous plan to get on top of the TB problems in Monaghan.

- This targeted programme will focus on such areas as epidemiology (how disease is distributed in the area), contiguous programmes, gamma interferon testing, cleansing and disinfection, testing compliance and frequency, and isolation of reactors.

- The Department will directly contact herd owners if there are particular measures relating to their herd, e.g. additional TB testing.

The map shows the number of herds with TB reactors in each DED of Co. Monaghan in the 12 months to August 2018. The colour scale indicates the numbers of herds with reactors.
What can herdowners in Co. Monaghan do to reduce their risk of TB?

These recommendations are part of the Department’s efforts to help farmers tackle TB.

1. Reduce the risk from badgers:
   i) If badger setts or latrines are present on grazing land, fence them off with electric fencing to keep the grazing cattle away.
   ii) Do not feed cattle concentrates spread on the ground, and try to avoid spilling feed on the ground, as badgers may consume it and contaminate any leftovers which cattle may subsequently eat.
   iii) Feed cattle in raised troughs.
   iv) Badger-proof farm buildings by covering the lower part of access gates to sheds so they can’t get through.
   v) Advise DAFM of any badger setts on your farm

2. Reduce the risk of contiguous spread
   i) Ensure boundary fences are well maintained, particularly if neighbouring land has a herd which has had TB in the recent past.
   ii) Avoid mixing groups of cattle which are normally managed on separate land fragments.

3. Reduce the risk of residual infection
   i) Consider culling any cattle which ever tested inconclusive, even if they subsequently re-tested negative.
   ii) Consider culling any cattle which were in the herd during any previous TB breakdown, particularly older cows.

4. Reduce the risk of introducing cattle which are infected
   i) If purchasing cattle, reduce the risk by sourcing them from a herd which has not had a TB breakdown in recent years.
   ii) If purchasing cattle at a mart, cattle with a more recent TB test date are likely to be at less risk than similar cattle which were last TB tested many months ago.

5. General Advice
   i) Ensure good quality TB testing facilities are available and the vet receives any assistance needed.
   ii) Farmers engaged in contract rearing should consider their biosecurity measures and how they would manage a TB breakdown affecting the contract arrangements.
   iii) Effective cleaning and disinfection of any areas where reactors were kept is essential and will reduce the risk of environmental contamination infecting other cattle.
   iv) If sharing machinery, trailers, etc with other farms, minimise the risk of TB spread through environmental contamination by cleaning and disinfection.

Further information is available at https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrol/bovinetb/ and from the Regional Veterinary Office, Farnham Street, Cavan.