

# Rural Development Sub-Committee

RDC(3)01-07 (p1): 12 July 2007

## Proposal for the Rural Development Sub-Committee's first scrutiny inquiry

### Terms of reference for the Rural Development Sub-committee's inquiry into current issues concerning Bovine Tuberculosis in Wales.

Bovine TB is a growing problem in Wales as it is in many parts so of the UK. In August 2004, the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee published the findings of its inquiry into bovine TB in Wales. It made 5 recommendations which can be found at Annex 1. In June 2007, the Independent Scientific Group (ISG) on Cattle published its final report entitled Bovine TB: The Scientific Evidence. The Rural Development Sub-committee wishes to revisit the issue in the light of the recent report and proposes to Scrutinise the Minister for Sustainability and Rural Development on:

the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the ISG report; and  
progress on and the effectiveness of the implementation of the EPC Committee's recommendations.

The Sub -committee will take evidence from key stakeholders during August and early September 2007 in order to invite the Minister to attend a scrutiny session based on the Sub-committee's findings in the early weeks of the Autumn term. The Sub-committee will make any recommendations it considers appropriate to the Sustainability Committee to be taken forward.

### Annex 1 - Recommendations of the EPC Committee

#### Recommendation 1

That the Welsh Assembly Government takes immediate action to tackle Bovine TB in Wales, as outlined in para. 3.8 of this report. Wales' approach to tackling TB should be holistic and pragmatic involving all aspects associated with the spread of the disease. Measures should be developed in partnership with all stakeholder groups and based on current scientific knowledge. "3.8 The Welsh Assembly Government could take immediate action in the following areas:

Implementation of pre-movement testing across Wales, with cattle sale dependent on a valid pre-movement testing certificate.

Increase the frequency of cattle testing in clean parishes from every four years to every two years.

Introduce the use of the gamma interferon test for all herd breakdowns to ensure diseased cattle are identified and removed as soon as possible.

Ensure that TB99 forms are completed for all herd breakdowns.

Ensure that the recommendations of the Independent Husbandry Panel are implemented on farms.

Collect and test wildlife killed in Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) outside hotspot areas.

Introduce a dedicated TB helpline or TB information packs to ensure help is available for farmers to deal with the stress associated with TB breakdowns and provide advice and guidance on TB control measures."

#### Recommendation 2

That the Welsh Assembly Government establishes an 'Intensive Treatment Area' within a hotspot area in Wales that has experienced prolonged problems with TB, incorporating the points set out in para. 3.12 of this report. This should be funded by the Welsh Assembly Government. "3.12 An Intensive Treatment Area could involve:

Investigating all cattle movements on and off farm associated with a new herd breakdown using and improving the Cattle Movement Tracking System.

Gamma interferon testing to ensure diseased cattle are identified and removed as soon as possible.

Testing of cattle on all farms in close proximity, e.g. within a 2km radius of a breakdown.

If investigations find that the cause of the breakdown is not due to cattle to cattle transfer, an investigation of major species of wildlife known to carry TB should be undertaken within a 2km radius of the breakdown. Wildlife that carry and transmit TB found to show signs of the disease should be removed. A level of prevalence / rate of transmission in wildlife should be agreed upon.

Potentially infected areas should be cleaned as well as practically possible to reduce the risk of transmission of TB to other wildlife.

On farm bio-security should be improved with the assistance of veterinary officers, Divisional Veterinary Managers, and others.

The progress of breakdowns on farms should be closely monitored.

Regular reports on the progress of the Intensive Treatment Area should be made to the TB Action Group (see below) and the Welsh Assembly Government."

#### Recommendation 3

That the Welsh Assembly Government incrementally rolls-out intensive treatment to other areas of Wales if, following evaluation, it proves useful in controlling TB. Sharing of costs of funding between the farming industry and the Welsh Assembly Government should be considered.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the Welsh Assembly Government establishes a Wales TB Action Group to deliver short-term measures to tackle TB in cattle and to investigate longer-term measures, as outlined in para. 3.16 of this report. Membership of the Action Group should be small and made up of those able to implement decisions, but representative of stakeholders. The Wales TB Action Group should be accountable to the Minister, but with a specific remit for action. Regular reports should be made to the Minister and publicised to all stakeholders. "3.16 The remit of the Wales TB Action Group could include:

Investigating the establishment of laboratory, testing and research facilities in Wales (e.g. to undertake gamma interferon tests, which must take place within 24 hours of samples being taken).

Considering support for farmers, such as an increased role for veterinary officers in advising on biosecurity risks.

Consulting on introducing an industry-levy to pay for TB testing and compensation.

Investigating other longer-term issues, such as the cattle valuation process."

#### **GB-wide issues**

#### **Recommendation 5**

That longer term and larger scale investigations, such as vaccine development and trials, continue to be undertaken at UK level.