



Meeting: Bovine TB Stakeholder Forum Implementation Working Group (IWG) – Meeting 1
Date: 09 March 2021
Time: 11:00 – 13:00
Location: Virtual Meeting

Attendees

Chair:

Sean Brady.

Organisations:

Lorcan McCabe, ICMSA; Paul Smyth, ICMSA; Hugh Farrell, ICSA; Neassa Fitzgibbon, ICSA; Ray Doyle, ICOS; Pat Farrell, IFA; TJ Maher, IFA; Gillian Richardson, Macra na Feirme; Kevin Twomey, Farmer.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine:

Paula Barry Walsh, Eoin Ryan, Philip Breslin, Karina Wrigley, James O' Keeffe

Bovine TB Forum Secretariat:

Rosanne Greene, Donal Mooney, Anthony Stringer

Apologies:

Minutes

Item	Minutes
Introduction and Terms of Reference by Chair Sean Brady.	The Chair introduced himself and invited the other attendees to do likewise. The Chair read out the terms of reference for the group as follows: The Implementation Working Group will be composed of officials from DAFM, farming organisation representatives and other relevant stakeholders. This group will be extensively consulted and involved in the implementation of the strategic policy options under discussion. The role of the group will be to consider the details and modalities for the policies set out in the bTB strategy. Each meeting would be attended by DAFM, Farm Organisations and representatives of the groups directly involved in the implementation of the policy under discussion. The Implementation Working Group will report to the TB Stakeholders Forum.

Implementation topics related to the TB Strategy for discussion:

Addressing the risk from inconclusive animals	There was much discussion around the new policy regarding the treatment of inconclusive animals that pass a retest. There are 1,800 such animals each year; they present a higher risk of becoming reactor in the future. These animals are currently restricted to the herd for life. Farmers are slow to cull them. The new policy involves Gif testing them at 6 month intervals. It is a risk
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	<p>based policy to clarify the status of these animals. If they subsequently test positive and meet the criteria they will be treated as singletons. The farm organisations called for them to be culled immediately and farmers compensated accordingly. Not all of these animals go on to be reactors and culling them all immediately would be excessive. The derogation that previously existed under EU Reg 64/432 is gone under the new Animal Health Law so all herds disclosing inconclusives will be restricted until the status of the animal is resolved. Previously in the region of 400 herds would have qualified for the derogation. It was suggested that farmers should be incentivised to remove them through paying farmers who voluntarily send inconclusive animals for slaughter. It was agreed to implement the policy but that the two proposals raised, i.e. of removing the inconclusives immediately upon disclosure with full compensation and of paying farmers who voluntarily send inconclusive animals for slaughter to incentivise them, would be brought to the TB Stakeholders Forum for discussion. Statistics on the findings and results generated by the new policy (e.g. GIF sampling results, numbers testing positive, etc) would then be shared with this IWG to provide context for those further discussions at the TB Stakeholders Forum.</p>
Enhanced actions to clear infection from extended breakdown herds.	<p>DAFM outlined the new policy. This policy involves an enhanced focus, using the tools already available, on herds that experience extended breakdowns, with a view to ending the breakdown as soon as possible. In response to points expressed by farming representatives, DAFM agreed to make the policy of extending the 60 day test out to 90 days, to maximise test sensitivity, optional for farmers; the default will be 60 days and a 90 day interval will only be used where the farmer requests it following discussion with the case VI. Depopulation of infected cohorts will be considered in such cases, where appropriate, and all other avenues have failed to resolve the problem. DAFM agreed to provide written statistics on the number of herds restricted for more than 300 days and for more than 200 days without at least one clear test, broken down by region, and to provide regular updates to this IWG on these statistics and on the implementation of this policy. There was broad support for implementing this policy.</p>

Implementation topics not related to the TB Strategy for discussion:

Revision of controlled calf rearing unit policy for movements of calves under 42 days out of restricted herds	The current policy regarding Controlled Calf Rearing Units (CCRU) allows for calves to move from reactor herds to controlled units for rearing. After a period of time and a number of clear tests they may move onwards from the units. No one has taken up the option of setting up a CCRU to date. Under the new Animal Health Law the option to move these calves on to other farms from a CCRU is gone and all such calves must move to slaughter either directly from the restricted herd, the CCRU or a feedlot. DAFM asked the attendees if they had any suggestions as to how this problem might be dealt with. No concrete suggestions arose but there was general agreement the issue needs further consideration. DAFM will consider carefully the points raised in relation to this.
AOB	IFA to forward details of a specific query to DAFM in relation to calf exports. The Animal Health Law comes into effect on 21/04/21. Financial and compensation discussions are the remit of the Financial Working Group and are not within the scope of this IWG.

Action Points

1	The topic of wildlife will be added to the agenda of the next meeting.
2	The two proposals in relation to changing the inconclusive policy (i.e. mandatory removal at disclosure with compensation, and payment to farmers who voluntarily slaughter them as an incentive) to be discussed at the TB Stakeholders Forum
3	Data from the implementation of the inconclusives policy (e.g. test results, number of animals, etc) will be shared with this IWG to provide a context for policy discussions at the TB Stakeholders Forum.
4	Extended breakdown herds policy to be amended based on IWG feedback such that herd owners are to be given option of doing 90 day or 60 day retest following discussions between the herdowner and the case VI; a 90 day test interval will not be mandatory.
5	DAFM to circulate summary herd detail re extended breakdown herds to this IWG and to provide regular updates on both the statistics and on the implementation of this policy