



Meeting: Bovine TB Stakeholder Forum's Implementation Working Group (IWG) – Meeting 21.

Date: 08 November 2022

Time: 11:00 – 13:00

Location: Online Meeting.

Purpose: The stated purpose of the IWG is to consider the details and modalities for the policies set out in the bTB strategy.

Attendees

Chair:

Sean Brady

Organisations:

Tomas Bourke, TJ Maher, IFA; Des Morrison, Paul Smyth ICMSA; Hugh Farrell, ICSA; Ray Doyle, James O'Donnell, ICOS; James Lynch, David Graham, Animal Health Ireland; Niall Feery, NPWS; Pat Neville; Coillte; Katie O'Dwyer, Hazel Mullins, Veterinary Ireland.

Communications: Michael Miley.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM):

Damien Barrett, Rosanne Greene, David Quinn

Bovine TB Forum Secretariat:

Donal Mooney, Anthony Stringer.

Apologies:

Michael Cronin

Minutes

Item	Minutes
Introduction by Chair	The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and thanked everyone for their time and contribution.
Minutes of last meeting	Minutes of the last meeting were agreed and action points discussed.
Disease Trends	<p>The Department gave an example of a discussion it had with a farmer who recently had a single reactor break down. The example provided was a historical residual infection case that highlighted the hidden risk when purchasing animals, the potential of misinformed purchasing and cattle to cattle transmission during trade. The example highlighted the fact that the spread of TB is multifactorial.</p> <p>The Department presented current disease trends. There is a rise in reactor numbers but a reduction in herd incidence. This is a concern and is likely due to larger outbreaks in dairy herds. The recent outbreaks in the Kilkenny and Tipperary border are actively being managed.</p>

	<p>A whole genome sequencing case in a Cavan dairy herd was presented along with an update of national herd history risk categories.</p> <p>The TB test was discussed, and the Department reiterated that the skin test is still the best test available. The management of animals is as important as the management of the disease. TB is a slow progressing disease and the question to ask is 'why is TB taking off now?' Is it: residual infection, immune response, local wildlife, larger herds and bigger breakdowns, or the quality of testing.</p> <p>AHI provided update on the TB TASA programme. 300 PVPs to date have been trained. The level of uptake by farmers to date has been low with only a total of 77 completed TASA.</p> <p>On Feirm Ground is an initiative to equip frontline agricultural advisors with the knowledge, skills and competencies to recognise farmers in distress. As part of this initiative the Department will include material in the reactor pack on dedicated resources to help farmers in distress. The Farming Organisations welcomed this initiative but stressed the importance of empathy when communicating to a farmer in a breakdown.</p>
Wildlife Programme Update	<p>The Department gave an update on the wildlife programme, its resources and the number of badgers vaccinated and removed in 2021 and 2022. It also discussed the recent visit of a French delegation who came to Ireland to observe the wildlife programme in practice. The Farming Organisations expressed their dissatisfaction with the progress of the wildlife programme.</p>
Communications Update	<p>The Department gave an update on communications since the last meeting.</p> <p>It also provided an update on historic inconclusive reactors. Farmers were sent a reminder text message on historic inconclusive on 4 November 2022. An update on inconclusive data since introduction of new policy on 9th April 2021 was presented. It was suggested the Department should time its communication on historical inconclusives to when decisions re culling are being made. It also suggested incentivising the removal of historical inconclusive reactors.</p> <p>The preparation for the distributing of the Animal Health Law leaflet is underway. It will be circulated to the IWG before distribution. Clarification was provided on certain elements of the AHL.</p>
Date of next meeting	06 December 2022 at 11 AM

Action Points

1	<p>The Department to provide a specific update on Wildlife Programme Statistics at the next meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Breakdown of Wildlife Dept staff per county and number of vacancies. b) Breakdown of Wildlife FRS per county and number of vacancies. c) Update on the number of setts reported to date via Badger web application.
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2	The Department to explore possibility of acknowledging notifications of Badger setts.
3	All Farm Organisations to notify the Department of their wildlife contacts per county before the next meeting.