



Meeting: Bovine TB Stakeholder Forum – Meeting 17
Date: 07 June 2023
Time: 11:00 – 13:15
Location: Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine - Backweston Campus

Attendees

Chair:

Michael Cronin.

Working Group Chairs:

Sean Brady, Implementation Working Group (IWG)

Gerard Kiely, Finance Working Group (FWG)

John Griffin, Scientific Working Group (SWG)

Organisations:

David Graham, James Lynch, Animal Health Ireland; TJ Maher, Tomas Bourke, IFA; Des Morrison, Paul Smyth, ICMSA; Ray Doyle, James O'Donnell, ICOS, Hugh Farrell, Neasa Fitzgibbon, ICOSA, Simon More, UCD; Clair Crowley, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sile Sweeney, Meat industry Ireland.

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

Martin Blake, Michael Sheahan, Damien Barrett, Conor O'Mahony, Maire McElroy, James O'Shaughnessy

Bovine TB Forum Secretariat:

James O'Keeffe, David Quinn, Donal Mooney, Anthony Stringer, Mary Hynes.

Apologies:

Kevin Twomey, Farmer, David Smith Ornuu; Elaine Houlihan, Macra na Feirme; Joe Burke, Board Bia: Pádraic Fogarty Irish Wildlife Trust; Michael Miley Communications Consultant.

Minutes

Item	Minutes
Introduction by Chair Michael Cronin	The Chair welcomed all representatives and gave an overview of the work the TB Forum and the working groups have completed to-date. The Chair thanked all representatives for their collaboration and thanked the Chairs of the working groups, John Griffin, Sean Brady and Gerry Kiely, for their continued work.
Minutes of previous meeting	The minutes of meeting 16 were agreed. The Chair discussed the action points of the last meeting.
Disease trends update	The Department provided a presentation on the current disease situation. Questions and answers followed. Please see presentation.
Any other business	Martin Blake, Chief Veterinary Officer, acknowledged the work of the TB forum. He addressed the shared objective of reducing TB and talked about current progress and challenges highlighting the fact that TB risk is affected by numerous factors. This reflection will inform the agenda and discussions of the next meeting. The chair noted that work continues, and the existing strategy is

	currently being worked through and it is close to full implementation. Observations and discussion followed. The IFA reflected on the possibility of reviewing the existing strategy and examining new strategic possibilities. Other discussions involved human resources and manpower, financing, strategy benchmarks and modelling capacity of TB. Simon More pointed out with current knowledge, it is not possible to quantify the relative impact of each policy change/addition. This will be resolved in time. Nonetheless, the critical issues to address and actions to take are clear, based on what we do know, on accepted epidemiological principles of disease control, and what has been found shown to be effective elsewhere.
Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) and Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	The Department gave presentations on PCR and WGS. Maire McElroy highlighted the Department laboratory will be using a direct PCR test on TB tissue samples before end of 2023. The use of direct PCR test will reduce considerable the period a farmer is awaiting on their TB tissue results. James O'Shaughnessy presented on WGS where the Department is now using this high-resolution epidemiological tool to assist in identifying sources of infection at breakdowns. The farming organisations welcomed both new developments as a positive step in the right direction. Please see presentations. Question and answers followed. Representatives were given a tour of the Department's laboratory.
Close of meeting	The meeting closed. The next Tb forum will be a date in October.

Action Points

1	The Department to provide information on the source of infection for new breakdowns in 2022
2	SWG to report at next TB Forum meeting position on regional approach to eradication.
3	The Department to do further analysis on breakdown herds in terms of number of valuations and depopulation.