

**WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS
Bovine TB
28 November 2013**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr Owen Paterson): I wish to inform the House of some further important steps that the Government are planning to take to tackle bovine TB (bTB). bTB is the most worrying and costly animal health problem facing our cattle farmers today, with more than 305,000 cattle slaughtered in Great Britain in the past decade alone. These plans are designed to address the risk of cattle-to-cattle transmission of the disease. They form part of the Government's wider strategy for achieving national bovine TB-free status in England within 25 years.

Today I am announcing our approach for addressing a number of long-standing weaknesses in our bovine TB controls. The first concerns the problem of late TB tests by a small minority of cattle farmers. Late testing is unacceptable, so from 1 January 2014 anyone who fails to complete their test by the set deadline, even by one day, will see their CAP scheme payment reduced. The reductions will vary, depending on the seriousness of the case, but the outcome I want to see is no late testing at all.

I am also launching a consultation on proposals for further tightening of cattle controls. Our proposals build on the raft of enhanced cattle measures that have been in place for many years, a number of which were enhanced in 2012. They include abolishing the pre-movement testing exemption for movements of cattle to and from common land. In doing this, we will need to find ways of ensuring that the testing requirements do not prejudice the very important part that grazing on some commons plays in protecting and maintaining valuable habitats.

The proposals also include phasing out the practice of lifting bovine TB restrictions on parts of a restricted holding. In future the whole of a holding would be either restricted or officially TB free any one time.

I am also consulting on proposals that would, as a last resort, enable wild or untestable cattle to be culled. It is important that we have the means to take action in exceptional cases where cattle of unknown disease status cannot be safely tested.

The final proposal in this consultation is designed to respond to the Members of this House, and their constituents, who have pressed the Government to make available information on the location of bovine TB herd breakdowns, so that livestock farmers are better equipped to deal with the local risks to their herds. This would build on the risk-based trading scheme launched earlier this month, which encourages farmers to share details of the disease history of any cattle they sell so buyers are better able to manage any disease risks.

I recognise that these rigorous measures will be tough for a significant minority of livestock businesses. However, we will not achieve the aims of our strategy, and be able to guarantee the future of the thriving cattle industry we all wish to see, without

tackling all of the vectors by which this disease can spread. That is why I remain committed to doing everything possible to get on top of and eradicate this devastating disease in both wildlife and cattle.