



Testing for *Mycoplasma bovis*

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) has been working to manage the newly found cattle disease *Mycoplasma bovis*.

Mycoplasma bovis can cause severe mastitis, arthritis and pneumonia in cows. It doesn't however, infect people and it doesn't affect the safety of milk or meat.

You can find full information about the disease at: www.mpi.govt.nz

MPI's surveillance programme

In order to make good decisions on how the disease should be managed, and whether or not we can get rid of it altogether, MPI needs to first know where it is.

To do this we have a full programme of checks going on around the country.

Nationwide

We are looking at milk samples supplied through our regional veterinary laboratories and through a survey run by Massey University looking at high-risk farms across 17 regions.

Districtwide

We are working with dairy companies to take milk samples across the Waimate and Waitaki districts. The programme, led by Fonterra and Oceania, involves testing bulk milk and milk from cows with mastitis, lame and other sick cows. All farms in the two districts will be tested.

Farms connected to *Mycoplasma bovis*

As our priority, we are testing all of the farms that are connected in some way to the farms we currently know have tested positive for *Mycoplasma bovis*. This includes neighbouring farms and those who have received animals from positive farms.

For these higher risk farms, a different testing method is applied. The following process applies:

First visit:

- A contractor for MPI (ASUREQuality) visit the farm to take blood and swab samples from a random selection of animals.
- To get the best possible results, they take blood tests from 130 animals. If a herd is smaller than 130, they will test as many as needed to provide a good, clear result.
- The samples will be sent to MPI's Animal Health Laboratory in Wellington for testing.
- The tests will take up to two weeks to complete and results will be reported back to farmers as soon as possible.
- If these tests are negative it does not mean a farm is definitely free of *Mycoplasma bovis* – a further one or two rounds of testing will be required to confirm that status.

- It is also possible that tests may provide an indication of a positive result. If this is the case, this will also require further testing to confirm one way or another.
- This process can be frustrating for farmers, but we need to have absolute confidence in the results – for everyone in the wider farming community.

Second visit:

- After three to four weeks, the tester will need to return to the farm and will once again test 130 animals. This will be a second random group of animals – and may or may not include some of the animals from the first round.
- We need to do a second round as, even if the first round was clear, there may still be disease present as we haven't tested all the animals. Also, some animals can be carrying the bacteria but not be showing symptoms. If the disease is present, by the time of this second testing we would expect a greater number of animals to be infected and for this to show up in our tests.
- Once again, it will take around a fortnight for results to come through.
- After this second round, there may be sufficient information to make a call on the status of the farm. But if there is any uncertainty, a further round of testing may be required which would be the same as the previous two visits.

What happens if a farm has infected animals?

- MPI will place a legal Restricted Place Notice on the property restricting the movement of animals and other risk goods off the farm.
- MPI will work with local vets to give advice to the farmer on managing any sick animals.
- Support will be available through MPI and the Rural Support Trust.

If our testing finds that it is feasible to rid New Zealand of *Mycoplasma bovis*, we will do so.

If you have any questions, contact your vet or MPI on 0800 00 83 33, or email: mbovis2017_liaison@mpi.govt.nz