



Prosiect bTB Gogledd Cymru North Wales bTB Project

North Wales bTB project

This is a targeted project for North Wales as part of the Welsh Governments' Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) eradication programme for Wales. It will be delivered by Mentera and expertise from Aberystwyth University Centre of Excellence for bovine TB (CBTB). This is an initiative that builds on the principles and best practices established by the Pembrokeshire project complementing it with a greater focus on keeping disease out.

The aim of the project is to promote collaborative working between farmers and their vets and empower them with information and training to manage the bTB risk on their farms. This will be achieved by combining enhanced biosecurity measures and improved access to and interpretation of herd TB test data. The project will also provide training and support to vets, approved TB lay testers (ATTs) and farmers to develop their knowledge of the subject.

The ultimate aim is to develop tools to reduce the number of bTB herd breakdowns in Wales and prevent future 'TB hot spots' occurring (keeping it out); or clearing them quickly once they are highlighted. This approach supports the wider **"keep it out and stamp it out"** strategies of the Bovine Tuberculosis eradication programme for Wales.

Project participation:

Six veterinary practices across North Wales have selected 12 farms to participate; these cover the High, Intermediate & Low risk TB areas. The farms include those that are or have experienced herd TB breakdowns and those that have not. This approach will help evaluate the biosecurity and risk-rate tools under different herd risks from TB.



The tools of the project:

Training & Education: Delivered through enhanced training programs to develop a skilled workforce better prepared to tackle bTB challenges. Farmers on the project will get together in an Agrisgop funded discussion group to give them opportunities to discuss TB in an open environment, learn from others and share best practice.

Biosecurity assessments

1. At the beginning of the project each farm will have a biosecurity assessment visit by their vet and will be given a weighted risk score for each biosecurity risk using the *HerdSAFE* biosecurity application.
2. A total risk score is then given to each farm. A bespoke report is produced outlining a few agreed actions to carry out and the expected change in risk score.
3. The vet uses the app to demonstrate the effect of proposed biosecurity practices on the weighted risk scores.
4. A new total risk improved score and star rating is then produced.
5. The app will be used at subsequent visits to assess changes made on the farm and to monitor progress in managing risks.

Data analysis – “Risk-Rate” and research

1. MV Diagnostics developed an algorithm using bTB testing results to generate a risk score for each animal on the holding. This analysis also gives a chronological picture of what happens on the farm with regards to residual disease risk.
2. “Risk-Rate” uses historical skin test data from herds and individuals, along with a more sensitive interpretation of the results to identify high risk animals. The analysis develops over time to see when and how often individual animals are identified as being at high risk of being infected with the TB bacteria (*M.bovis*). The data is enumerated and a traffic light system is allocated to the individuals in the herd. Red = high risk, Amber and Green. Red risked animals are advised to be voluntarily culled or managed out at a time to suit the management of that animal within the herd.
3. Animals that are identified as high risk can be culled at a time convenient to the farmer such as at the end of lactation or when barren. Alternatively they can be managed differently, such as isolated in a different group or subjected to snatch calving along with not keeping their offspring as replacement heifers in the herd. These high risk animals may also have concurrent disease. Vets interrogate and discuss the risk data with the farmer.
4. Investigation of concurrent diseases & infections in relation to TB risk.
5. Risks from wildlife, principally badgers, in relation to current or historic TB breakdowns.
6. Provision of samples for research into bTB infections in cattle herds.

Behavioural science interviews

The project provides an opportunity to understand and influence participants behaviours in relation to bovine TB.

Behavioural scientists from Aberystwyth University will engage with the project's vets and farmers throughout the project (training days, farm visits, conferences and county shows, etc.).

The insights they gain from these interactions on bovine tuberculosis controls and breakdown management, will inform the training they provide participating vets, itself designed to help farmers optimise their engagement in project actions.



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