



MYCOPLASMA BOVIS



SOME COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (AS AT 26 JUNE 2018)

When will we know if phased eradication has worked?

It is hard to say exactly. At this stage we can see a connection between all infected properties, and we only have one strain of the disease.

We are still tracing movements. It's a tricky disease to test for and there are animal movements we haven't been able to track down yet. This makes eradication harder.

Most of the work should be done in the next year or two, and we need to keep tracing animals, and testing animals and milk, until our checks find no more cases of the disease. It could be 8–10 years before we can know for sure that we are *Mycoplasma bovis* free.

What would happen if my farm came under suspicion?

If our tracing of cattle from infected farms suggests you may be at risk, you'll have a call from our casing team. They'll ask questions about animals you've brought onto your farm and when.

The timing of movements may be enough to rule you out, but if not, one of our vets books in to come to your farm and take blood samples from some of your animals. At this point you may be put under biosecurity controls (either a Notice of Direction or a Restricted Place Notice).

Testing can take some weeks, and several rounds of tests can be needed to confirm whether the disease is present. About 70–80 percent of farms under Notice of Directions tested are negative, the controls are removed, and you can continue farming.

What happens if my farm tests positive?

If infection is confirmed, your farm would be identified as an Infected Property. If you don't already have a Restricted Place Notice this will happen now. The animals will need to be culled.

Your personal case manager (Incident Control Point Manager/ICP Manager) would work with you on plans for your farm. All your cattle will be culled according to the plan we agree with you.

The Rural Support Trust and your industry organisations are available to help.

Your farm would be cleaned and disinfected (by a contractor and at our expense) and then it would need to be kept free of cattle for 60 days.

Your farm can then be restocked, which we can help you plan.

There is compensation available for culled cattle. Partial payments can be made within a fortnight of culling.



What's an IP, an RP and a NOD?

An Infected Property (or "IP") is a farm where a genetic test (PCR) confirms *Mycoplasma bovis*. All cattle will be culled from these farms. Infected properties are under legal controls known as a Restricted Place Notice.

A Restricted Place (or "RP") is a farm where there is either confirmed disease or a very high suspicion of disease. If not confirmed, RPs are likely to have had some test results indicating the disease and are having more testing. Cattle and other risk goods (equipment, vehicles, farm equipment etc) cannot be moved on or off the farm without permission from MPI. Under the eradication programme, many RPs will be culled.

A farm under a Notice of Direction (or "NOD") is where we believe there has been a risk movement – like a transfer of cattle from an infected or high-risk property. Testing is underway. Farms under a NOD cannot move cattle and risk goods off the farm. 70–80 percent of farms under a NOD prove to be negative and the controls are lifted.

What's the story with farms under surveillance but not movement controls?

Some farms under surveillance are relatively low risk. This means we're running further testing to confirm if there is any risk and whether they should be subject to movement controls.

Why won't you tell us where the infected farms or the suspect farms are?

Along with the affected farmers, we will let immediate neighbours of Infected Properties or high-risk properties know that *Mycoplasma bovis* is present. This helps them to take steps to improve on-farm biosecurity and reduce the risk to their own stock. This balances the privacy concerns of individuals with the need for farmers to protect their own farms and support their communities.

NAIT numbers of affected animals will soon be published on the MPI website to give farmers another way to check movements of stock.

Farmers need to complete their Animal Status Declarations (ASDs), disclosing the health history of their stock, and whether their farm has been under any movement controls.

How can I protect my farm from my neighbours' stock?

Over the fence spread is not easy – we have seen no case in New Zealand to date.

Talk to each other about how to manage your biosecurity.

If your neighbour is grazing the boundary, keep your cattle back.

Use electric fence outriggers on the boundary so there is no nose to nose contact.

When did the disease get here?

All the evidence we have is that *Mycoplasma bovis* arrived in New Zealand in late 2015 to early 2016. Although investigations are ongoing, we have two lots of evidence that support this – genetic analysis and modelling work carried out by the MPI Animal Health Laboratory in collaboration with the molecular epidemiology laboratory at Massey University; and our tracking and tracing activity. It is possible that new evidence will come to light. But right now, we have sound scientific evidence pointing to a likely entry date of late 2015 to early 2016.

Will the person who brought it into the country face repercussions?

Right now we do not know exactly how *Mycoplasma bovis* was introduced to New Zealand. While we continue to investigate how the disease got here – both through science and through compliance checks, we may never know how it got here or if any individual is responsible. We will continue to keep farmers informed of any developments in our investigations. A report on our early look at possible entry pathways is on the MPI website: www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis.

Why didn't you close Cook Strait to cattle movements when it was found in the South Island?

Closing Cook Strait would have required a particular legal control that has to be based on strong scientific justification. The risk of disease transfer across the Strait was assessed as low, and the imposition of controls would have created a disproportionate impact on normal farming activities. Imposing the control would also

have created an impression internationally that New Zealand was dealing with a more serious biosecurity issue, creating a high risk of trade impacts. We now know that the disease was in the country for 18 months before we were aware of it and a significant number of risk cattle movements had already occurred between the North and South Islands during this time.

What advice can you give about buying stock?

The infected farms and farms we know of that are under a material level of suspicion are in lockdown. This includes farms under Notice of Direction – and remember, 70–80 percent of these farms end up testing clear.

Do your homework about the original source of the cattle, their health history, and find out what milk was used when they were reared – whole milk or calf milk replacer.

If you don't like the answers, don't buy the animals.

Always apply good biosecurity measures when introducing new animals to your farm – like keeping them separate from the rest of the herd for a period to observe their health. DairyNZ have a helpful pre-purchase checklist: www.dairynz.co.nz/pre-purchase

How long can *Mycoplasma bovis* hang around outside of an animal?

Mycoplasma bovis can survive outside of cows for very short periods.

The disease breaks down within a matter of days when exposed to sunlight and fresh air. The bacterium does survive for slightly longer in moist environments. This is why we take a cautious approach of a 60 day stand down period between when a farm is depopulated and when a farmer can restock.

Can I purchase raw milk from a dairy farmer to rear calves?

Feeding unpasteurised raw milk from cows infected with *Mycoplasma bovis* (or any mastitic or sick cow milk) is a high-risk activity.

You should try to get some confidence the source herd is *Mycoplasma bovis*-free. Ask for the results of the recent bulk milk tests.

If feeding whole milk, consider pasteurisation of the milk. In smaller operations it is possible to treat the milk with citric acid. Full information is on our website and on DairyNZ's website. You can also use calf milk replacer.

What's your advice on holding calf days?

For this coming spring, we recommend against schools and clubs holding calf days. Bringing animals from different herds together does pose a risk of disease spread. While the risk is relatively low, we are in a critical phase for tracking down and eradicating *Mycoplasma bovis* and unnecessary mixing of animals at events like calf days should be avoided.

If schools and clubs do go ahead with events, ensure you have consulted with your communities and taken all sensible precautions. Our fact sheet has ways to minimise risks: www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis.

Where do I get more information?

MPI *Mycoplasma bovis* website: www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis

Questions for MPI – **0800 00 83 33** or email: MBovis2017_Liaison@mpi.govt.nz

Rural Support Trusts: 0800 787 254 (0800 RURAL HELP). This line is only for support for rural people: farmers, families, workers. Select "0" for *Mycoplasma bovis* questions, or select your region to chat about other matters.

Industry groups:

DairyNZ – **0800 43 24 79 69** or visit www.dairynz.co.nz/mbovis

Beef + Lamb NZ – **0800 23 33 52** or visit www.beeflambnz.com/news-views/topics/M-Bovis

Federated Farmers – **0800 32 76 46** or www.fedfarm.org.nz