

Mycoplasma bovis – latest update

We are working hard to eradicate the cattle disease *Mycoplasma bovis* (*M. bovis*). Where it is found, we work closely with affected farmers to remove it from their farms and support them as they move forward. *M. bovis* is an animal welfare issue and has no impact on food safety or human health.

Facts at a glance:

- The vast majority of properties that have been tested as a result of tracking and tracing, have been cleared with no cases of *M. bovis* found. The total number of properties under movement restrictions (or pending restrictions) has fallen from about 350 in May to around 280 in August 2018.
- Since the disease was first detected in July last year, around 60 properties have been confirmed with *M. bovis*. Put in context, there are more than 20,000 dairy and beef farmers in New Zealand.
- 20 properties are now restocked, and another seven are in the process of restocking, after going through the process of depopulating and cleaning. Teams are working with the farmers on each property to help them recover and move forward.

The fight against *M. bovis* is a joint effort between MPI, DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand; with significant support from:

- Federated Farmers
- Rural Support Trust
- New Zealand Veterinary Association
- Meat Industry Association
- Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand
- Rural Women NZ

This is a very stressful time for affected farmers and their families. Look out for your neighbours, friends and family and seek help if you are worried about their health or well-being.

CALF REARING

Calves can become infected with *M. bovis* through direct contact with infected cattle, or by drinking milk from infected cows.

Avoid trading milk if possible. If you have a farming operation that requires trading of calves or milk, you can take some simple steps to reduce the risk of spreading *M. bovis*. For more information about feeding, visit www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING BULLS

The highest risk of spreading *M. bovis* is the movement of infected animals from one herd to another. Bulls who have been in contact with infected cows, and then moved to another herd are at risk of spreading infection.

Bulls arriving on farm – all ages

Bulls should arrive properly identified and with their movement history. If sourcing bulls, make sure you let the vendor or agent know that you expect these details. On arrival the bulls should be held separately from the main herd for at least seven days to assess their health, and to complete procedures such as drenching. If you have any concerns about the health of the bulls, contact your veterinarian before you mix the bulls with the herd.

Bulls leaving the farm

If the bulls are leased, then talk over the options with the owner.

One year old bulls

These bulls may be a risk for the spread of infection. The best indicator of the level of risk from these bulls is the health status of the herd the bulls have been running with.

Two year old (and older) bulls

Once mating is finished these bulls should be sent directly to slaughter. It is important that they go from the farm to the slaughter premises directly, not via saleyards or any other intermediate stopping point. If they are being held for further use (mating in autumn or spring 2019) then follow the recommendations for one year old bulls.

If the bulls are of dairy origin, the herd has been screened via bulk milk and discard milk tests, and the results show *M. bovis* infection is not detected, then the risk of these bulls spreading infection is lower than those from a property where test results are unavailable.

If the bulls are from a beef property and *M. bovis* test results are unavailable, then the best indicator of the level of risk from these bulls remains the health status of the herd(s) the bulls have been running with – pay particular attention to the herd's levels of mastitis and lameness.

BULK MILK SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME

Another round of *M. bovis* bulk milk testing is taking place this spring. All dairy farms supplying milk will be tested.

With the ultimate aim of eradicating *M. bovis* from New Zealand, this surveillance programme is essential to providing further assurance of previous non-detects. It will also help to identify any clusters of disease that could have gone undetected so far. Spring is the best time to test for *M. bovis* because infected animals are more likely to shed the bacteria after a stressful period, such as calving and the start of lactation.

All test samples will be taken as part of the normal milk collection process so farmers will not be required to do anything additional. Results will be provided to farmers in November.

Farmers can find out more about the programme at www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis or ask your local dairy company representative.

CALF DAYS

MPI believes mixing young animals at calf days and returning them to their home farm is not worth the risk under the current state of heightened biosecurity in New Zealand.

We recommend that, while the *M. bovis* eradication programme is underway, schools and other groups managing calf days look for alternatives. It could become a 'pet day' with other pets and animals, or you could use technology and come up with an innovative compromise. Calf Club NZ has launched an 'online calf club', find out more and register at calfclubnz.co.nz.

BUYING STOCK

The infected and most suspicious farms are in lockdown and cannot trade stock.

When purchasing stock, 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 seven days to observe their health. Always complete your NAIT records. Knowing where your cows have been is crucial to understanding and preventing the spread of disease.

DairyNZ has a helpful pre-purchase checklist: www.dairynz.co.nz/pre-purchase.

For more information:

www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis

www.dairynz.co.nz/mbovis

www.beeflambnz.com

www.rural-support.org.nz