

8 December 2025

ATISN 26378 – Bovine TB

Dear

Thank you for your request which was received by email on 13 November 2025.

Information requested

You asked the following questions. We have provided a response beneath each question.

1. Differences between the TB vaccine to be used in cattle from that used currently in badgers, people, or cattle in Ethiopia and India? i.e. what development of the cattle vaccine referred to by the Deputy First Minister is still required?

There is no difference. The same vaccine, *Mbovis* BCG Danish 1331, has been used in the cattle vaccine studies and field trials and is used in badger vaccination. Papers published on the studies in cattle undertaken in Ethiopia and India indicate the same vaccine has also been used. The *Mbovis* BCG Danish 1331 vaccine is one, amongst other vaccines, also used in humans.

The further work referred to by the Deputy First Minister being undertaken in the cattle vaccine field trials, relates to gathering additional data on the companion DIVA test performance. The aim is to obtain more precise estimates of both the specificity and sensitivity of the DIVA test, in both vaccinated and unvaccinated cattle.

2. What is the current sensitivity and specificity of the DIVA test in its latest trials differentiating between vaccinated and infected cattle?

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is leading on the cattle vaccination studies and trials on behalf of the GB governments. This research work is continuing, and the Welsh Government is not aware of information regarding the sensitivity and specificity of the DIVA test having been released to date.

3. What is the sensitivity and specificity of the DIVA test in its use across Ethiopia and India as understood by the Welsh TB TAG or the Welsh Government TB Policy team or equivalent?

A number of scientific papers relating to the studies undertaken in Ethiopia and India have been published. The Welsh Government has not been able to determine whether the sensitivity and specificity of the DIVA tests used in those studies have been defined. The APHA research and field studies to characterise the performance of the DIVA test in

GB cattle will be more relevant than work done overseas. The Welsh Government will await the findings of this research to inform future policy.

4. What is the sensitivity and specificity of Enferplex, and of Actiphage in differentiating between vaccinated and infected cattle as understood by the Welsh TB TAG or the Welsh Government TB Policy team or equivalent?

The Welsh Government's understanding is that the Enferplex, and Actiphage tests are not designed as DIVA tests to be able to differentiate between vaccinated and infected cattle.

5. What is the target rate of specificity and sensitivity (reliability) of the test to differentiate between cattle vaccinated vs those infected with bTB before the Government is prepared to deploy it nationally?

The primary screening test for TB in cattle in the UK and recognised by the World Organisation for Animal Health is the single intradermal comparative cervical tuberculin test (SICCT), or skin test. The Welsh Government understand the current studies aim to develop a test with a sensitivity and specificity which will be at least as good as, or better than the skin test.

6. As vaccination of infected cattle has no protective effect, what steps will the Welsh Government be taking to increase the reliability of bTB testing of cattle still further to maximise the proportion of clean cattle available for vaccination? The Welsh Government is to be commended for its UK leadership in cattle testing in its use of Gamma in particular; use of Enferplex (following which infected cattle are not automatically required to be sent for slaughter, so they can stay on farm and be milked or raised for beef) is very much more accurate than any test other than Actiphage so would seem to be a good candidate for increasing detection and eradication of bTB from the national herd.

The Welsh Government recognises the main limitation of the skin test is its sensitivity at standard interpretation. In certain disease situations severe interpretation of the skin test is applied along with the Gamma and IDEXX blood tests to increase sensitivity. Based on epidemiological evidence the Welsh Government will consider applying these additional tests to increase sensitivity in other situations. We also support the continued research into new and novel tests.

7. Like deer, sheep, goats, pigs and camelids also carry and transmit bTB (Defra's website now publishes figures of passive testing for these). Given the regular nature of co-grazing and farmyard mixing of these livestock with cattle, what plans does the Government have for regular surveillance of these non bovine carriers of bTB? At present, only cattle are subject to routine testing and slaughter when they are commonly co grazed with sheep across Wales.

There are no plans at present to change the current passive surveillance in these non-bovine species.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office,

Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,