

Mycoplasma bovis National Beef Cattle Surveillance



What is the *Mycoplasma bovis* National Beef Cattle Surveillance?

National Beef Cattle Surveillance for *Mycoplasma bovis* (*M. bovis*) is part of New Zealand's comprehensive background surveillance to provide evidence that infection is not widely distributed among beef and drystock cattle in New Zealand.

Blood samples are taken while cattle are yarded for other management procedures. Flexibility around the time of sample collection allows for it to occur during routine farm management activities. Cattle are also being sampled at meat processing plants and on entry to a large feedlot.

So far, the findings indicate that *M. bovis* is not widespread in beef and drystock cattle properties.

National Beef Cattle Surveillance will also be crucial in gathering the evidence needed to be confident that we've eradicated *M. bovis* from New Zealand.

Why is my herd being tested for on-farm beef and drystock surveillance?

National Beef Cattle Surveillance aims to provide ongoing evidence that infection is not widespread in the beef and drystock sector.

To date, infection has not been found through on-farm beef and drystock cattle surveillance.



Do I have to pay for testing?

No. The *M. bovis* Eradication Programme covers the cost of taking the samples and the laboratory tests associated with the *M. bovis* National Beef Cattle Surveillance. However, if you require additional samples taken or additional tests at the same time (such as BVD tests), these will not be covered by the Programme.

How does testing work for on-farm beef and drystock surveillance?

A single sample of blood will be taken from between 25 and 150 cattle that are yarded for routine farm management procedures (such as pregnancy testing, drenching and vaccination). The minimum sample size is consistent for all regions, while the maximum sample size is capped depending on the region where the cattle are located.

Regions are defined as higher intensity sampling regions or lower intensity sampling regions, depending on the number of links to infected properties that have been found within the boundaries of the region, relative to its population size. A single sample of blood will be taken from 25 to 80 cattle in lower intensity sampling regions and 25 to 150 cattle in higher intensity sampling regions.

Approximately 10ml of blood should be collected from the tail vein of each animal that is to be tested. The animal's NAIT tag will be scanned at the same time. If the animal is untagged, this detail must be recorded, along with the total number of untagged animals.

It is important that you are aware of the NAIT requirements and ensure that all cattle are tagged and registered in the NAIT system before the veterinarian or veterinary technician visits. You will need to be ready to supply their NAIT details to the sample collector.

How will the samples be tested?

The blood samples will be tested for antibodies using an ELISA test. The test determines the presence of antibodies to *M. bovis*.

The test is very accurate in determining the infection status of the herd. It is not used to determine if individual animals are infected.

It is extremely uncommon for cattle to return positive results to the ELISA test. Cattle that are positive to the ELISA test are called “detects” and it indicates that antibodies may be present. This is not a confirmation of infection.

Several hundred thousand samples have been screened, with at least 99.9% showing a non-detect. This finding means an ELISA test that shows a detect is a very uncommon event that must be followed up with further investigations.

Just as a detect result is not a confirmation of infection, a non-detect result is not a confirmation that *M. bovis* is not on the property – the screening is only an indication of whether *M. bovis* antibodies were detected.

When will results be available?

We aim to provide results within 3 weeks of samples being taken.

Non-detect results for on-farm beef and drystock cattle surveillance will be reported by email. Be sure to provide your current email address.

For detect results, which indicate further testing is required, you will be contacted by the *M. bovis* Eradication Programme to discuss the next steps.

This is a screening test, not a final result. Most cattle are not expected to return a detect result, some herds will require further testing to confirm their disease status.

What if further test results are positive?

Properties with detect results will require further investigation to determine their infection status. This is not a cause for alarm. Upon further investigation, the majority of these properties with detect results are ultimately confirmed as not infected.

If the ELISA results indicate further investigation is required, you will receive a phone call from the *M. bovis* Eradication Programme within 14 business days to discuss what further on-farm investigation(s) will be required.

In most cases, further testing is conducted under Active Surveillance. Properties under Active Surveillance are not subject to legal controls, such as restrictions on moving cattle on or off-farm. You can continue normal farming activities.

Where there is elevated suspicion of infection, a Notice of Direction (NOD) may be served on the property, restricting all cattle movements off the property while on-farm sampling is undertaken, and the infection status of the property determined. This outcome is very unlikely. If a NOD is issued, a Case Manager (CM) will be appointed to work with you. The CM will be the primary point of contact for you. The CM will also assist in gathering information and helping you get through the process as quickly as possible.

For more information

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