This document aims to summarise the requirements and prohibitions which arise for Herd Keepers engaged in TB Testing. Herd Keepers’ must adhere to a number of legal requirements arising from the Domestic and EU provisions detailed below.


Facilities for Testing

You should ensure that there are adequate handling and testing facilities in place and that assistance is provided to allow the test to be properly completed on the scheduled date. Otherwise, the testing veterinary practitioner has been instructed not to carry out the test.
**Bovine Tuberculosis - Annual Round Test Rule**

Under EU and National rules, each and every bovine animal on the holding, with the sole exception of calves under six weeks old which were born on the holding, must be subjected to an Annual Test. At any herd test, you are therefore obliged to present all such cattle regardless of ownership, previous test date or intended future destination. You may be required to complete and sign a declaration to the effect that all eligible animals on your holding and under your control have been presented for the test. It is not allowed to keep animals under more than one herdnumber on a single holding even if such cattle are kept in a separate field on the holding or in a separate shed in the yard. (See information note for applicants for a herd/flocknumber on the Department website). If untested calves are being subsequently sold prior to the next full herd test these untested calves will require pre-movement testing.

The Department reserves the right to request presentation of any animal, regardless of age, for a test where deemed appropriate on veterinary grounds. Hence, you may be required to carry out a test on your herd and/or on any animal regardless of age e.g. where disease is detected in your herd, a reactor is disclosed, contiguous herd tests, suspect/positive etc.

**Herd Profile**

At the time of testing, you must be able to account for all animals listed on your herd profile which is generated from the data held on the Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) computer system. The herd test cannot be regarded as completed until this has happened.

**No Stock**

Notify your Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) if your herd no longer has stock.

**Animal Identification**

It is your responsibility to ensure that all animals are properly identified (2 plastic tags bearing the same identification number) and registered before the test commences. Temporary metal tags used to identify untagged animals for and during a test are not the official means of identification. All animals that may have been previously temporarily identified by means of a metal tag should be properly identified by means of two plastic tags.

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**Correlation of Temporary Tags**

Proper replacement plastic tags for temporarily tagged animals must be ordered immediately and inserted into the temporarily tagged animals. In addition to retagging the animals, you are required to associate the animals' correct tag numbers with their temporary tag numbers at Section A on the ER96 form, copies of which are available from your veterinary practitioner. Animals that are not correlated will be considered as unidentified and may ultimately be seized and subject to destruction without compensation under EU Regulations and S.I. 77/2009.

If you wish to move any of the retagged animals off your holding or have the test date inserted on the passport/identity card, your testing veterinary practitioner needs also to complete Section B of the ER96. If the animals are not properly identified on the test reading day, a further visit by your veterinary practitioner may be necessary to certify at Section B on the ER96 the properly tagged animals, as tested and to insert the test date on the passport/identity card. You can expect to be charged for such a visit. It is your responsibility to send the completed ER96 to the RVO.

**Treatment of Animals with Veterinary Medicines**

Any medical treatment could compromise the accuracy of the TB test and/or delay the removal of reactors (because it is illegal to put treated animals into the food chain before the expiry of the withdrawal period) and thus prolong the TB problem and restriction period in your herd. Furthermore, it is a requirement that a reactor is removed within 30-days.

It is very important that you do not medicate your animals if the withdrawal period will not have expired before the test has been completed. If treatment is urgently required for an animal after receipt of a test notification letter and the withholding period will not have expired before the test, you must obtain certification to this effect from your veterinary practitioner and the testing veterinary practitioner must have given written permission for the treatment.

The urgency certificate must specify:

1. The nature of the condition being treated,
2. Why the treatment was urgent and could not be delayed until after the test,
3. The precise name of the medication administered,

4. Why a medicine with a shorter withdrawal period could not be used, and

5. Why it was impracticable to bring forward the test.

Non-urgent treatments, including routine anthelmintic/fluke dosing, should be postponed until the individual test result for the animal is known. If you consider it important that your cattle are treated for fluke or similar before the scheduled date of the test, you may, only if permission is given by your RVO opt to bring forward the herd test so that the treatment can be administered as soon as the test result is known.

Timing of routine treatments in restricted herds should be discussed with the RVO veterinary staff and the testing veterinary practitioner in advance. Where animals have been medicated the testing veterinary practitioner, must notify the Department by recording on the test report details of the medicine administered to those animals recorded as reactors. Accordingly, if testing is being performed by someone other than the veterinary practitioner who prescribed/administered the medicine you must seek their written permission to administer the medicine prior to commencing the test.

In cases where a reactor has been treated with medication before or after receipt of a test notification letter and irrespective of whether the medication was urgent or not, a decision will be taken on a case by case basis on the timing of the on-farm valuation. In general, the following rules apply:

1. If all of the reactors have been treated with a veterinary medicine whose withdrawal period will delay the removal process - the valuation will take place close to the end of the withdrawal period.

2. If only some of the reactors have been treated and have to be retained on the holding until the end of the withdrawal period - the animals which can be removed immediately will be valued as normal. The valuation process for those being retained on the holding will be delayed until close to the end of the withdrawal period and this valuation will be paid for by you.

3. If reactor animals have been valued before you advise that the animal/s have been medicated, a decision will be taken by Department staff as to whether it is necessary to have the reactors re-valued closer to the date of removal. Where this is deemed necessary, you will be required to cover any additional valuation costs.

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An animal which has been treated with a veterinary medicine whose withdrawal period has not expired before the due date for removal as reactor will, depending on the particular circumstances, be either:

1. Destroyed on the holding and removed to a knackery at your expense or,
2. Retained on the holding in isolation until the withdrawal period has expired (thereby prolonging the period of restriction). Eligibility for compensation will depend on the particular circumstances.

**Restriction of movement where test is not finalised and/or disease is disclosed**

A herd test must be completed i.e. all parts of the herd tested within a period of 14-days from the commencement of the test. You may not move or allow to be moved any animal off the holding, including to slaughter, during the period between commencement and completion of a test except under and in accordance with the terms of a movement permit.

**Dairy Farmers - Pre-Declaration of Beef Breed Suckler Cows**

Dairy farmers should complete form ER83 available from the RVO or online at the Department’s website at [http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/formsdownloads](http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/formsdownloads). The purpose of this form is to enable you, if relevant, to identify and pre-declare Beef Breed Suckler cows so that they may be excluded from calculation of the notional milk yield of your herd which would have an impact on reactor valuation compensation payable, in the unfortunate event of a TB breakdown. Please note that this form, when completed, must reach the RVO before the commencement date of any test, including a private test. If the form is sent by post, then a certificate of posting should be obtained.

**Declaration that all eligible animals are being presented for test**

You may be required to complete and sign a Declaration on Form ER 11 that all eligible animals on your holding and under your control have been presented for the test.

**Gamma Testing**

To enable the detection of the maximum number of infected and diseased animals in a herd an additional blood test known as the Gamma Interferon Assay may be carried out in addition to the skin test. The blood test may be used as a quality control measure on reactors identified by the skin test and/or as a diagnostic tool.

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test where the Veterinary Inspector (VI) considers that the TB epidemiological situation necessitates additional testing. Both the blood test and the skin test are approved tests under the relevant legislation and you are required by law to allow these tests to be carried out on your herd.

**AFTER THE TEST**

**Animals with positive and inconclusive reactions to the TB test**

If an animal discloses a positive result to a TB test, it will be removed as a reactor and your herd will be restricted. Reactor and inconclusive reactor animals may only be moved direct to slaughter on foot of a paper movement permit issued by the RVO and the permit must be presented to the plant where the animal is to be slaughtered. If a reactor or inconclusive reactor animal is presented, with a passport but without a permit, at a plant that does not slaughter such animals, for contractual or other reasons, the carcase and offals may be condemned and disposal and ancillary costs charged to the person who presented the animal.

Where on any holding there is a reactor, no animal may be moved on to or off the holding except under and in accordance with the conditions set down by the Department. As stated below, clear cattle may only be moved direct to slaughter without a movement permit.

**Inconclusive Reactor Animals**

Where an animal discloses an inconclusive reactor result it will not be permitted to move from your herd for the remainder of its life other than under permit issued by the RVO, direct for slaughter in an approved premises i.e. Not to a local authority abattoir. It is not permitted to be traded on the open market, including farm to farm, to marts or export or to be moved out of your farm for exhibition at shows, for embryo transfer/AI or such like events. In exceptional cases, an inconclusive reactor animal that has passed a retest may be permitted, by the RVO, to move to a feedlot for slaughter within a reasonable timeframe. Where there is an animal with an inconclusive reactor result on test, your herd may or may not be restricted. Accordingly, do not move any animal off your holding to another holding or to a mart without first checking with the RVO if this is allowed. In any event, even if allowed to move within Ireland no animal will be eligible for export until the status of the inconclusive reactor(s) has been resolved.

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Milk

To safeguard your own health and that of your family, do not drink raw milk from either reactors or inconclusive reactors and it is strongly recommended that you do not use or drink unpasteurised milk in your home at any time as you run grave health risks by doing so while there is disease in your herd.

1. Milk from reactors, inconclusive reactors or animals showing signs of Tuberculosis must be immediately withheld and must not be included in the milk dispatched to the creamery.
2. Milk from the remaining clear animals in restricted herds must only be delivered to a processing plant where it will be heat-treated.
3. Milk from reactor or inconclusive reactor animals, which has not been heat-treated, must not be fed to calves or other animals; however this milk may be fed to other reactor animals on the farm.
4. You must retain a record of how much milk was produced by reactor and/or inconclusive reactor animals on your farm how and where the milk was stored, how it was disposed of and the date it was disposed of, from the date of disclosure until the date of removal from your farm or in the case of an inconclusive reactor until the status of the animal has been resolved.

Passports/identity cards

1. It is no longer a legal requirement on the testing veterinary practitioner to insert the herd number in which the test took place or to sign the passport/identity card.
2. It continues to be a legal requirement, for the most part, for the testing veterinary practitioner to stamp the date of the test on the passport/identity card. The only exception to this requirement is that passports/identity cards should not be stamped for reactor retests, except where it is a clearance test. The date of the test may be stamped under any of the three columns headed 'Date of test', 'Herd No.' or 'Signature of Veterinary Surgeon'. Stamping the date of test on the passport/identity card is not deemed to be certification of the test.
3. Certification of the test is completed by the testing veterinary practitioner at the time the result of the test is submitted to the RVO by paper or electronically through the Department's Animal Health Computer System (AHCS).
4. The only valid test date is that held on the Department's AHCS and it is this system that determines an animals' eligibility for movement.

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5. The Minister shall not be held liable in disputes arising over incorrect test dates on cards.

6. Passports/identity cards for clear animals will no longer be held by the RVO during the restriction period. Veterinary practitioners, consequently, are no longer required to submit passports/identity cards to the RVO for any animals other than standard inconclusive reactors and any surplus or incorrect passports/identity cards.

7. In the event that any animal(s) gives a reactor result to a test, the testing veterinary practitioner will retain custody of the passport/identity card for the individual reactor animal(s) for destruction or return to the RVO if required.

8. In the event that any animal(s) gives an inconclusive reactor result to a test, the testing veterinary practitioner will submit the passport/identity card for the individual animal(s) to the RVO.

9. If you opt to retest the inconclusive reactor and it passes the retest its passport/identity card will be returned to you from the RVO marked 'Passport Cancelled/Conditional Movement permit' so it will be available to you to move the animal directly to slaughter when you choose to (there is no restriction on the type of plant/abattoir that may accept and slaughter such an ex-inconclusive reactor animal). If you opt not to retest the inconclusive reactor but opt instead to slaughter it you must obtain a permit from the RVO and it must go directly to an approved slaughter plant.

10. When the date of test has been inserted on the passports/identity cards for animals that have tested clear, they should be returned to the keeper by the veterinary practitioner.

11. Department Personnel will no longer collect passports/identity cards where herds are restricted as a result of lesions detected at slaughter. However, such herds will be restricted and will not be permitted to move animals from the herd other than direct to slaughter.

12. Department Personnel will collect passports/identity cards in limited exceptional cases e.g. where for non-compliance reasons the herd is not allowed to send animals to slaughter.

13. Passports/Identity Cards are very important documents and should be retained in a safe secure place at all times. All passports/identity cards, including all surplus cards, by law, must be surrendered to the testing veterinary practitioner on the first day of the test, including reactor retests.

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14. Please note that Movement permits will not be issued in lieu of missing/lost passports/identity cards. Replacements for missing/lost passports/identity cards must be applied for and obtained before the animals to which they refer may be moved off the farm.

**Movement of Clear animals from Restricted herds**

Clear animals on restricted holdings may only be moved direct to slaughter. Previously, these animals could only move under a movement permit. However, since the movement of animals is controlled by the AIM system, clear animals on restricted holdings (with limited exceptions) may now be moved direct to slaughter without a paper movement permit. In order to facilitate intake at the slaughter plant such animals should be accompanied by their passport/identity card and the document "Food Chain Information (FCI) for Cattle", which can be obtained from your RVO or at the following: http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/foodchaininformation/

Clear animals on restricted holdings may not be moved to another holding (i.e. a farm) or through a livestock mart until the herd is de-restricted and it is an offence to attempt to do so.

**TB reactors and Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) results**

Any TB reactors that have previously been diagnosed as BVD PI will not be eligible for compensation in addition to their salvage value. Furthermore, any animal, including a dam of a PI calf, for which a BVD result is outstanding, will require a BVD virus negative result before being eligible for full market valuation.

**Before Moving Animals after a test**

Once the test has been completed, and if it is a clear result, before moving any animal off your holding other than direct to slaughter, you should contact your veterinary practitioner to ensure that the test results have been reported to the RVO or recorded directly on the Department’s AHCS. If you intend to export, you should also check if the animals are eligible for export. If the test has not been reported at the time of the movement, the most recent test date or export eligibility will not be available to enable a compliance cert to issue, or displayed at the mart and it will not be possible to certify the animals for export. Such animals are therefore not test-eligible for export and should not be presented for export. Late or non-submission of a test report may result in your herd being restricted pending clarification of the position.
Interference with a Test

It is illegal to interfere in any way with the accuracy of a test for TB. In addition, it is your responsibility under law to ensure that there is no interference with a test. If the reaction observed and purported to be as a result of the tuberculin test is not a response to the tuberculin, the Department has legal powers to act appropriately, including restricting the holding and arranging for the animal(s) to be seized and slaughtered or destroyed without compensation and instigating prosecution proceedings.

Herd contiguous to a high risk breakdown

In the event that your herd is found to be contiguous to a high risk TB breakdown in a neighbouring herd, it may be deemed appropriate by the RVO for your herd to be tested. The RVO will require your herd to be tested if it is considered at risk of having been exposed to infection either from the same source as or from a detected "high risk" breakdown. If the RVO requires your herd to be tested and it has not been tested in the 4-months prior to the breakdown in the neighbouring herd, your herd will be temporarily trade suspended until the test has been carried out i.e. you will not be permitted to move animals off your holding, other than directly to slaughter. You will however be automatically authorised by the RVO to move animals into your herd. This automatic authorisation will expire one month after the due date of the test or on completion of the test whichever is the earlier. This trade suspension will be immediately lifted once your herd reacts negatively to the test.

If your herd has been tested in the 4-months prior to the breakdown in the neighbouring herd, you may still be required to test but your herd will not be trade suspended provided that the test is conducted by the due date.

Post de-restriction check testing regime: including High Risk Herd Information

Irish research has shown, over many years, that herds that have experienced breakdown with 2 or more infected animals and where infection is acquired and/or transmitted within the herd then they are at increased risk of having further TB breakdowns and that the longer an animal remains in such a herd following a clear test the greater the likelihood of infection in that animal.

1. Low Risk herds following de-restriction must conduct a post de-restriction test after 6 months.
   They will not be trade restricted. If clear these herds go back into the round testing programme.
2. Low Risk herds de-restricted after a breakdown caused by a positive factory lesion, where no other reactors were disclosed during the breakdown, are no longer required to conduct any follow on testing post de-restriction and these herds go back into the Round testing programme when they are de-restricted.

3. High Risk herds have to undergo 3 herd tests post-de-restriction. The first test may take place at a time of the farmer’s choosing between 3 months after de-restriction but no later than 8 months after de-restriction. If clear, the herd must complete 2 more tests at 6 monthly intervals. These herds will be trade restricted at 3 months post derestriction and will continue to be so until the first post-derestriction test takes place and is clear.

**Private Tests**

If you wish to sell individual animals and need to test those animals in advance of your Round test, you may apply for permission to have a private test conducted on those animals up to 30 days prior to the scheduled date of your Round test, provided you have completed a full herd test within the previous 12 months. You may also apply for permission to advance the date of your Round test.

**Compliance Certificates**

If you intend to sell or otherwise move an animal from farm-to-farm or to a show (i.e. not to a mart or while still in your ownership directly to slaughter), you must get a compliance certificate from the Department to confirm that the animal’s identification and movement details have been recorded on the AIM computer system. A compliance certificate will not issue unless there is a valid TB test on the AHCS for the animal. This means that any animal for which a compliance certificate for a farm-to-farm/farm to show movement is sought must be in test (i.e. TB tested within the previous 12 months) on the date of the earliest possible movement of the animal following receipt of the compliance certificate. Otherwise, the application will be rejected. Furthermore, compliance certificates will only be valid for either 30 days or the remaining validity period of the test concerned, whichever is the shorter. Certificates of Compliance can be obtained from a number of sources including from Private Veterinary Practitioners/Marts registered to issue them or online directly from the AIM system through the www.agfood.ie facility, from RVOs or from the Cattle Movement Notification Agency.

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Herd Inspections Bovine Identification Regulations

The Department is obliged to carry out inspections on herds under the Bovine Identification Regulations, independent of any inspections carried out for Cross Compliance purposes. Where possible, these inspections may be carried out at the same time as herd tests. You are reminded of the importance of keeping your on-farm herd register up to date at all times as this will be inspected at herd inspection time.

Biosecurity

You are reminded that it is in your own interest to be aware of the necessity to adopt good biosecurity practices to avoid the entry to and the spread of disease on your holding.

Particular attention should be given to:

1. Maintaining the security of boundary fences,
2. Minimising contact between your herd and neighbouring or other cattle,
3. Isolating cattle entering your holding either from another holding or on return from a mart or show etc.,
4. Isolating sick animals,
5. The provision of disinfection footbaths and overalls for personnel visiting your premises,
6. Providing clean drinking water for all animals,
7. Securing feedstores to prevent access by livestock, wildlife or vermin,
8. Fencing off access to badger setts and latrines on pasture land,
9. Providing secure clean feeding troughs not accessible to wildlife, and
10. Rodent control measures.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR NON COMPLIANCE

- Suspension of test.
- Liability to pay for the test.
- Re-test at your expense.

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Restrictions on the movement of animals into and out of your herd.

Seizure and destruction of animals without compensation.

Movement of animals to a knackery at your expense.

Possible consequences for disease compensation pursuant to the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

Possible Penalties on Farm Scheme Payments under EU Cross Compliance Rules.

Withdrawal of herd health certification.

Prosecution pursuant to Statutory Instrument 58/2015.