

SURVEILLANCE OF *MYCOBACTERIUM BOVIS* INFECTION IN CATTLE IN GREAT BRITAIN DURING 2006

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Tuberculosis in cattle is caused by infection with *Mycobacterium bovis*. There has been a provisional 6% reduction in the number of new bovine tuberculosis incidents in Great Britain in 2006 compared to 2005. Up to 2005, the number of incidents in Great Britain has increased by an average of 16% each year since the mid 1980s. The disease is characterised by the progressive development of granulomatous lesions in lymph nodes, lung tissue and other organs. Species are not all equally susceptible or share the same ability to act as reservoirs of infection for other species: some are considered spill-over hosts, whereas others (e.g. cattle and badgers) act as true maintenance hosts

Diagnosis depends largely on statutory tuberculin testing of herds and routine inspection of carcasses at slaughter. Suspicion of TB in the carcasses of other domestic animals became notifiable in GB in 2006, identification of the disease is dependent on veterinarians recognising the signs in the live animal or at post mortem. The methods for confirmation of infection rely on the appearance of *M. bovis* colonies on culture and their differentiation by molecular typing.

In 2006 the TB Diagnosis Section at the Veterinary Laboratories Agency - Weybridge received 13,907 bovine tissue submissions for confirmation of diagnosis by culture. The number of submissions from other species was 690 and consisted mainly of a non-random sample of deer, cat, dog, pig, sheep, goat and camelids. 4,710 (34%) of the cattle submissions and 83 (12%) of submissions from these other species were found to be positive for *M. bovis*. The available evidence suggests that cases in non-bovine animals are the result of infection spill-over from a cattle or wildlife reservoir.