

Farm news

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TB Biosecurity Actions

Many of you have enjoyed a free TB Advisory visit over the past year and we'd love to hear back from you with any alterations that you have managed to put in place!

For those of you who have not managed to fit one in, do not despair – this month we have included a one-stop shop for environmental bTB biosecurity recommendations.

With a lot of herds now in the midst of turnout, it is well worth thinking about what you can do to minimise your risk of introducing a new bTB infection into your herd whilst the cows are out. There are a lot of ways to reduce the risk, from straightforward measures through to slightly more involved strategies.

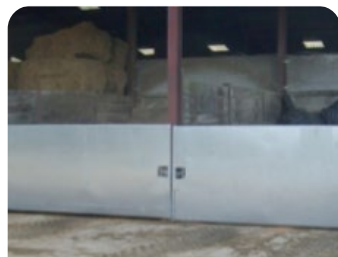
Housing- shut the doors and reduce the gaps!

The measures below have been tested by APHA in a 2 year DEFRA funded study and were found to be 100% effective in keeping badgers from buildings, as long as kept shut at night and, as with all farm equipment, maintained regularly.

Now is a perfect time to make those alterations to housing without so many interfering 'helpers'...

Gates/Doors:

- Maximum gap **7.5cm** underneath – badgers can squeeze under a gap of 10cm!
- Minimum height of solid section of gate (i.e. not mesh/bars) **more than 120cm**.
- Watch the vertical gaps between hinge and gate – these should be **less than 7.5cm**.
- Make sure you make measurements on level ground.



a) Ideal gate: galvanised steel



b) Home made version: old cubicle matting



BEWARE!

Open feed-face style systems are very common in dairy systems and also on beef units. Protection of these is very difficult in the day without affecting easy feeding/pushing up of feed and cleaning. Suitable gates at both ends of the passage way should be installed and **closed at night as a minimum**. However, blocking off loafing yard gates outside the shed may prove more beneficial if shutting off passageway ends is difficult!

Indoor water/feed troughs:

- Water supply- mains water is safest to reduce risk of ingestion of bTB - it can survive in water for 20-60 days depending on conditions.
- Clean troughs regularly!
- Trough lip height- **minimum of 90cm**, this may deter badger visits but will not prevent them.
- Heights **above 120cm** greatly reduce the chance of badger access.

Feed/grain stores:

- These are not biosecure if left open!
- Close grain stores at night – many already have a roller shutter door in place.
- Install a bulk feed bin for feed normally left in open bags:



– APHA found in a 2 year DEFRA study that feed bins with closable lids were 100% effective in keeping badgers from cattle feed.

– Ideal bins are of a suitable size for bags of ordered feed (i.e. bulk bags (L) 1340mm x (D) 1260mm x (H) 1060mm), have a secure lid with hinges and are made of a smooth material that badgers cannot climb up.

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Grassland

Mineral licks:

- If bolus use does not suit your system, a mineral lick stand should be used to provide safe access for cattle at grass:
 - Stands should be more than 90cm off the ground and made from a solid material badgers cannot climb.
 - They should be robust and stable if pushed by cattle.



Outdoor feed/water troughs:-

- Cattle must not be fed from floor, only in troughs.
- The same height rules apply as above, with regular cleaning and covering when not in use even more important outside!
- Badger exclusion feed troughs can be used to prevent badger access outdoors:
 - These include external roller bars to prevent climbing.

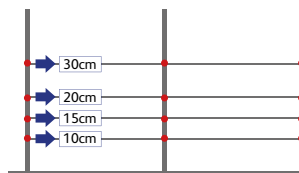


Cattle electric fencing:

- Reduce the chances of cattle coming into contact with potentially infectious materials (badger faeces/urine) or grazing in areas where badger activity is increased (near badger setts/latrines) by using standard stock fencing.
- It is advised that cattle are kept a minimum distance of 3m away from setts/latrines as badgers may scent mark/urinate around these areas.

Badger electric fencing:

- This will prevent badgers from accessing yards, edges of silage clamps, clusters of buildings/yards and reduce opportunities for contact with cattle feed/water and cattle in general.
- The low, 4 strand electric fencing can be made with handles and connections to accommodate gates and allow access points for cattle/farm machinery.
- Measurements:
 - Wire at heights of 10cm, 15cm, 20cm and 30cm from the ground with posts closely spaced to prevent sagging.



APHA have tested this form of fencing over a 2-year study and have found this to be effective in completely protecting large areas of the farm, but this does require proper maintenance.

This article only covers a small selection of improvements available to build the environmental biosecurity of your farm with respect to bovine TB. For further advice please contact us at the practice or visit www.tbhub.co.uk for further biosecurity information. Watch this space for further TB articles to come!



Pre-tupping checklist

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It may seem like you have only just gotten lambing 2020 out of the way, but now is the time to be thinking about getting ready for the 2021 season and prepping your tup so that he is in fine working order to get your ewes in lamb.

A few things to remember that must be done before tupping time:

Vaccines

If you use any of the abortion preventative vaccines then these should be given to all eligible animals before tupping time. Both available Enzootic Abortion vaccines (Enzovax and CEVAC Chlamydia) require administering between 4 months and 4 weeks pre-tupping. The toxoplasmosis vaccine (Toxovax) requires administration between 4 months and 3 weeks pre-tupping.

Check the tup's feet

If the tup's feet are not good he is going to struggle to serve the ewes you want him to. Ideally check his feet at least 4 weeks before he is required — this should allow any problems you may find to resolve by the time he is needed.

Check the tup's testicles

Are they evenly sized? Are there any lumps or bumps? Is there any heat or swelling? All of these could indicate an issue with the tup's sperm production and he could be sub fertile/infertile. Again, this check should be done at least 6 weeks before you want to use him, and again in the few weeks before use if any abnormalities were found on the first examination. 6 weeks is roughly how long sperm production takes, so if there are any issues 6 weeks before use they may resolve and allow him to be fertile by the time he is needed (or it gives you time to source an alternative tup!). If you suspect any abnormalities, chat this through with your vet.

Check the body condition scores (BCS) of your ewes and tups

If sheep are too skinny or are over fat they may struggle to get in lamb. Ideally to maximise your lambing percentage, ewes should be on a rising plane of nutrition before and at service (without being too fat!). More advice on appropriate BCSs for sheep can be found at beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk.



Rose Jackson's next adventure!

After 16 years at Scarsdale, moving from fresh-faced new grad, to senior assistant, to partner, to clinical director, Rose has decided to hang up her parlour top (for now, at least!) and give herself yet another challenge.

Rose plans to travel the world for a year with her family (although these plans have had to be put on hold temporarily!) before returning home to Derby and deciding what comes next in her career, whether that's clinical vetting or something else.

We wish Rose safe travels and exciting adventures, and look forward to seeing her again in the future. Unfortunately Rose's leaving party wasn't be able to happen as planned, but we consider it a postponement rather than a cancellation and look forward to celebrating her years at Scarsdale when we can get together again. Rose, thank you so much for all that you've done for your team and for your clients – Scarsdale life won't be the same without you.

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