

Update – Ongoing screening of bulk tank milk

27 March 2020

Key points

Encouraging results from Bulk Tank Milk (BTM) surveillance, as eradication effort makes progress.

Mycoplasma bovis Programme continues operations, with some changes under Alert Level 4.

Recently, over 99.8% of farms are reported with a BTM 'non-detect' result each screening round.

As the national prevalence of *M. bovis* decreases, we need to look harder to find fewer infected farms.

Over 95% of farms with BTM 'detect' result found not to be infected.

National bulk tank milk screening

A milk sample is taken in the first two weeks of each month and is screened for *M. bovis* using the ELISA test. Farms with a 'detect' result are contacted by *M. bovis* Programme staff and are placed under a Notice of Direction restricting cattle movements out of the supplying herd while on farm sampling takes place. A detect result is not a positive result, and over 95% of farms with a detect result are found to not be infected.

National bulk tank milk screening will continue to operate through Level 4 COVID-19 restrictions.

Screening bulk tank milk for the presence of *M. bovis* antibodies remains a useful tool for identifying infected dairies. Of the 33 dairies confirmed as infected from 2019 and 2020 to date, 23 of these were reported with least one bulk tank milk ELISA detect result. Of these 23 dairies, ten were investigated initially based on the screening result.

Since the update provided in February 2020, we have confirmed infection on one additional dairy investigated due to the results of January 2020 screening.

The table below is a summary (as at 27 March 2020) of the outcomes of bulk tank milk screening for 2019 autumn-winter and for the ongoing regime.

Screening period	Number of ELISA tests performed	Number of farms screened	Number of farms with a detect result	Number of new farms confirmed as infected
April-June 2019	34,033	10,556	157	6
July-December 2019	54,661	11,217	74	2
January 2020	11,108	11,108	14	1
February 2020	10,999	10,999	10	0
March 2020	10,875	10,875	10	0

Analyses are currently underway that will inform the optimal screening frequency and test threshold for the 2020/21 milking season.

Expectations for autumn-winter 2020 screening

The number of farms requiring follow-up based on April to June 2019 screening results was higher than average. Impacts were magnified as samples during this time were stored and tested at a later date. For April to June 2020 screening samples will be tested as they are collected, minimising the number of farms requiring follow up at any given time.

Automated reporting of bulk tank milk non-detect screening results

Significant progress has been made towards an automated way for farmers to access bulk tank milk non-detect screening results. Due to COVID-19 priorities there may be a delay in releasing the automated system. Our goal is to provide access in the early spring 2020 milking season. Dairy companies do not have any visibility of screening results.

