

TB2 Restricted Herds – Approved Markets / AFU's / AQU's – Part 6

INTRODUCTION

Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) has become endemic across large parts of England and Wales. Extended TB restrictions which are particularly common and can remain in place for many years in TB 'hotspots' or areas of high incidence can cause considerable pressure on farms. The very nature of modern livestock farming requires the ability to be able to frequently move and trade animals, for instance as breeding / replacement stock or as young stock for fattening / finishing etc. Farms which are under TB2 restrictions for long periods of time can face a number of issues not least pressure on housing facilities, rising feed costs and resulting health and welfare issues. Taking into consideration the fact that some farming enterprises cannot remain viable if unable to move/trade and that animals can suffer as a result, a number of specialist units (under licence from Animal Health) have been allowed to be set up. The options available/open to you as a farmer under TB2 movement restrictions include:

Approved Dedicated Sale / Market – these can be held to enable the sale of clear testing cattle from herds under TB2 restrictions.

Approved Finishing Units (AFU's) – these can be set up to take cattle that have tested clear on a reactor farm (i.e. a farm under TB2 restriction).

Approved Quarantine Units (AQU's) – these can be set up to take calves (up to the age of 10 months) from restricted farms which lack sufficient facilities to rear all their calves.

APPROVED DEDICATED SALE / MARKET

An approved dedicated sale / market can only be held for TB restricted cattle and the aim is to provide a means for cattle keepers under restriction to apply to sell TB restricted cattle. *(Note: The market must be approved by Animal Health prior to going ahead).*

Any buyer must prove to the market that they meet the criteria to move cattle from the sale, either by presenting their approval as an Approved Finishing (AFU) or Quarantine Unit (AQU) or to confirm that they will move the cattle directly to slaughter (i.e. by identifying the slaughterhouse they intend to take the cattle to etc). Licences will only be issued if the movements are considered low risk.

All cattle entering the market are subject to the condition that their onward movement must be either; direct to a slaughterhouse, direct to an AFU, or direct to an AQU.

(Note: Cattle once in the market can not be licensed to return to their farm of origin and must be sold).

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

The conditions of approval for a dedicated sale / market are in addition to the conditions for the Animal Gathering Licence. Animal Health can only consider approval of dedicated sales for TB restricted cattle if the following conditions are met:

- The gathering has been licensed under the Animal Gatherings Order.
- If the sale is for the dispersal of a herd it must have a permit dis-applying the 6 day standstill.
- All cattle from restricted premises must be licensed into and from the sale (i.e. be accompanied by either a TB16a or TB16b licence).



Fig 1: An approved dedicated sale / market.

- All cattle entering the sale from TB restricted farms must have been tested with negative results in the previous 60 days.
- Any animals showing clinical signs of TB must be reported to Animal Health and isolated.
- The market / auctioneer is responsible for completing the licence after the sale (i.e. with the details of the animal's destination etc).

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MOVEMENT THROUGH AN APPROVED MARKET

All potential sellers must let the market / auctioneer know of their intention to move cattle to the sale / market and must supply a list of the animal identification (i.e. 'ear tag' numbers) of the cattle to be moved at least 7 working days before the sale.

LICENCES NEEDED

All owners wishing to enter cattle into the sale must apply to Animal Health for a licence.

- A TB16a will be issued for movements through an approved dedicated sale / market.
- A TB16b will be issued for movements through an approved dedicated sale / market where the sale is for a herd dispersal.

(Note: A TB24b cannot be used for movements through an approved dedicated sale).

(Note: If the buyer intends to move cattle to an AFU or AQU they must present their notice of approval to the market / auctioneer).

(Note: The movement must be direct to the premises noted on the licence).

(Note: Cattle for onward consignment direct to a slaughterhouse must be marked with an orange stripe along the back).

(Note: Animals cannot arrive the evening before the sale takes place and stay overnight. All cattle should leave the market as soon as possible after the sale has taken place).

APPROVED FINISHING UNITS (AFU's)

Approved Finishing Units (or AFU's) were first introduced back in 2003 to provide an outlet / route for cattle that have tested clear on a farm under restriction.

The cattle which are to be moved have to be licensed to move from the restricted farm to the AFU by Animal Health.



Fig 2: A typical AFU facility.

Approved Finishing Units can be with grazing or without grazing, are mainly established by farmers as private enterprises/businesses and many start off as empty cattle sheds which are situated on an existing farm but far enough away from the main buildings to be deemed a separate unit etc.

It is important to note that upon leaving the AFU all the cattle must go direct for slaughter.

(Note: Approved Finishing Units can also take cattle; currently on a farm not under TB2 restrictions which have been moved without the required pre-movement test, that are exempt from pre-movement testing or that have been pre-movement tested).

AFU's – CONDITIONS

Approved Finishing Units (AFU's) regardless of their size and geographical location are governed by a series of conditions, which include:

- The unit must have an individual CPH number and cannot be SOA or BCMS linked with another farm/unit.
- (Grazing AFU) these units will only be approved in annual testing parishes where a confirmed breakdown has occurred and the cause is not just purchased cattle.
- All cattle moved on to an AFU must have tested clear for TB in the last 90 days or be from a herd currently not under restriction. AFU's cannot take reactors, inconclusive reactors (IR's) or direct contacts.

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- All cattle upon leaving an AFU must go direct for slaughter either under a general licence or via an approved dedicated slaughter market.
- Stock inside an AFU must **not** be able to have nose to nose contact with stock outside of the AFU (either when housed or at grass).



Fig 3: An example of a feed face which is not suitable for an AFU.

- Current wildlife biosecurity advice from FERA should be followed. Please see the section below entitled 'FERA - Wildlife Biosecurity Recommendations'.
- If the cattle are to be housed for the majority of the time they are on the AFU then they should be fed indoors and the housing should be wildlife proof.
- Facilities (such as number of cubicles etc) must be adequate for the number of cattle.
- Equipment and machinery used in the AFU should only be used in the AFU and should not be used with other cattle on the farm or shared with other farm premises etc.



Fig 4: There should be dedicated dis-infectable clothing for whoever enters the AFU.

- There should be dedicated dis-infectable clothing for whoever works in the AFU (i.e. spare pairs of overalls).
- There must be adequate dedicated testing facilities attached to the AFU, including a crush, a race, a collecting yard and a covered testing area etc.
- Run-off water and effluent from the unit must be collectable to prevent contamination of local watercourses.
- Facilities must be present for the storage of slurry and manure. All slurry and manure from the AFU must be spread onto Arable land or, alternatively, on to pasture land on the AFU which will not be grazed within 60 days of spreading.

(Note: It may be necessary to comply with other conditions imposed by your local Animal Health RVL/ROD).

INSPECTION

If you are interested in establishing an AFU you should contact your local Animal Health Office who will provide you with an application form. Once Animal Health has received your application form a Veterinary Officer (VO) will visit you to inspect the proposed AFU.

The VO will inspect the premises taking into consideration the above mentioned 'Conditions' but will pay particular attention to biosecurity and the premises testing facilities. Following a satisfactory inspection, approval will be given.



Fig 5: AFU's are inspected by Animal Health.

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(Note: AFU's in addition to TB testing are subjected to inspections where both the premises and movement records are inspected – notification does not need to be given).

(Note: Animal Health tries to inspect every AFU at least once a year).

ENTERPRISE AND PROMOTION

AFU's should be viewed as a commercial business opportunity and it is up to the owner of the unit to negotiate contracts and purchase agreements and advertise the unit through local farming organisations and press etc.

MOVEMENTS ONTO AN AFU

If you wish to move cattle onto an AFU from a herd under TB restrictions you must first acquire a movement licence – (form TB16). TB16 forms will be issued by the Animal Health office responsible for the farm of origin.

All cattle being moved from a TB2 restricted farm must have received a tuberculin skin test and tested clear within 90 days of the movement.

Cattle can also be moved onto an AFU via a dedicated sale for TB restricted cattle (i.e. a dispersal sale). The cattle must have tested clear within 60 days of the movement.

MOVEMENTS OFF AN AFU

All cattle upon leaving an AFU must go direct for slaughter. The movement to the slaughterhouse can take place under a general licence (TB24g) or via an approved slaughter market for TB restricted cattle.

AFU's & TB TESTING

The testing of cattle within an Approved Finishing Unit (with grazing) takes place at 90 day intervals. If testing falls behind (i.e. becomes overdue) by 30 days then any general movement licences will be refused and the AFU status may be revoked.

If the Approved Finishing Unit is a without grazing AFU then the testing of cattle is done on a 6 monthly basis.

TB INCIDENT

If following testing; a reactor, inconclusive reactor or direct contact is found, then the AFU will follow the standard Animal Health procedures for compensation, removal and post mortem.

If following a TB breakdown on an AFU the owner wishes to depopulate the AFU they may do so. Prior to restocking, the AFU must be cleaned and disinfected and inspected by Animal Health.

LIFTING TB2 RESTRICTIONS

The owner of an AFU can seek to achieve TB free status (OTF) for their AFU. If no more cattle are to be moved onto the AFU the owner can notify Animal Health in writing of their intention to seek OTF status. Once notification is received, TB2 restrictions can be lifted when all the cattle in the unit have been slaughtered or when all the cattle are housed and test negative to two short interval tests.

APPROVED QUARANTINE UNITS (AQU's)

Approved Quarantine Units (AQU's) were first introduced back in 2009 to provide an outlet / route for calves from restricted farms. The idea is to move calves (up to the age of 10 months) onto the unit with a view to them gaining official TB free (OTF) status in the future. The following rules / conditions apply;

- The unit must be under TB2 restrictions.
- All calves moved on to the AQU must be; under 10 months old, unrestricted, if from a restricted farm have tested clear within the previous 60 days and if untested be less than 42 days of age.
- The calves must not be allowed to graze.
- The unit must be filled within 6 weeks of the first calves arriving. (Note: The AQU must be closed after 42 days of the first calves arriving. No movement licences will be issued after this period).
- The calves must have two clear tests before restrictions can be lifted.
- The first test must be at severe interpretation and take place a minimum of 60 days after the arrival of the last animal on to the unit.
- The second test must be at standard interpretation and take place a minimum of 120 days after the arrival of the last animal on the unit.

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- Once OTF status has been achieved the movement restrictions will be lifted and the calves can be moved off the unit without the need for a licence.



Fig 6: Beef calves in an AQU.

- The unit should have an individual CPH number (i.e. the unit cannot be SOA or BCMS linked with another farm/unit).
- Current bio-security advice from FERA in relation to protection from wildlife transmission should be followed.
- Facilities (i.e. number of troughs, feed space etc) in the AQU must be adequate.
- All equipment and machinery used in the AQU should only be used in the AQU.



Fig 7: In accordance with FERA advice, gaps under gates should be less than 10cm to help prevent wildlife gaining access.

- There should be dedicated dis-infectable clothing for whoever works in the AQU.
- There must be adequate dedicated testing facilities attached to the AQU.

- Run-off water and effluent from the unit must be collectable. Facilities must be present for the storage of slurry and manure.
- A contingency plan should be in place in the event of a test failure (i.e. additional housing space and food must be available to avoid welfare issues).

INSPECTION

If you are interested in establishing an AQU you should contact your local Animal Health Office who will provide you with an application form. Once they have received your application form a Veterinary Officer (VO) will visit your farm to inspect the proposed AQU.

AQU's once official TB free status (OTF) has been achieved and prior to restocking may be inspected (i.e. the premises and movement records may be inspected).

MOVEMENTS ONTO AN AQU

If you wish to move calves onto an AQU from a herd under TB restrictions you must first acquire a movement licence – (form TB16). TB16 forms will be issued by the Animal Health office responsible for the farm of origin.



Fig 8: Calves less than 42 days of age can move onto an AQU untested.

MOVEMENTS OFF AN AQU

Calves/cattle can only leave an AQU in the following circumstances:

1. Once official TB status is achieved (a TB10 will be served).

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2. As a discrete group, without the addition of further animals, under licence, to a second AQU.

AQU's & TB TESTING

Once the unit has been closed (i.e. after the allotted 42 day period), testing of the calves/cattle will be at 60 day intervals.

TB INCIDENT IN AN AQU

In the event of a TB incident in the AQU the standard Animal Health procedures for compensation, removal and post-mortem of reactors will apply. The procedures for regaining OTF status will apply and a short interval testing regime implemented.

FERA – WILDLIFE BIOSECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

In terms of AFU / AQU buildings - suitable conditions include:

- Sides of the building should not be open, but of a smooth and solid construction (preferably concrete) and be at least 1.5m high.
- Doors/gates should be smooth and of a solid construction and be a minimum of 1.5m high.
- Gaps at the sides and under doors/gates and walls should be no greater than 10cm.
- If possible all feed and water troughs should be inside secure buildings.



Fig 9: Gaps under gates must not be able to be enlarged by digging.

- Wildlife must not be allowed access to the effluent and waste water from the unit.

- Where possible and appropriate electric fencing / wire netting can be used around the boundary of the AFU/AQU to help prevent wildlife gaining access.
- Where possible and practical feed can be stored in secure feed bins / silos etc.



Fig 10: Where possible store feed in secure feed bins/silos, and do not store food outside.

Pasture is a more difficult area as there are no tried and tested methods of reducing contact but some tips include;

Avoid supplementary feeding at pasture if possible or if not, don't leave excess feed on the ground. Where possible suspend mineral licks at least 3 feet off the ground, or put them on an upturned oil drum. Restrict cattle access to wooded areas or known setts/latrines.



Fig 11: Where possible prevent cattle from accessing areas of known badger activity.

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