

# Protect your farm from *Mycoplasma bovis*

## TESTING SERVICE AND HERD BULLS

- The main way *Mycoplasma bovis* spreads from farm to farm is by the movement of infected animals.
- Once on farm, the disease spreads through close contact between animals, and consumption of untreated infected milk by calves.
- Bulls in New Zealand are considered low risk, but they do have the potential to spread the disease.
- *Mycoplasma bovis* is considered to be contained to the known infected farms, so the risk from farms not under stock movement control (most farms in New Zealand, including those in the same regions as Infected Properties) is very low. Thus testing is mainly around customer assurance for those selling livestock.

## TESTING FOR *MYCOPLASMA BOVIS*

Even though the risk of service bulls carrying *Mycoplasma bovis* is low, it is understandable that some farmers are seeking reassurance that the bulls coming onto their farms are not infected with *Mycoplasma bovis* and that some bull suppliers are interested in getting their bulls tested.

The recommended test for bulls is a PCR test. This test looks for evidence of *Mycoplasma bovis* bacteria in the sample. A preputial swab is the preferred sample, however these can be difficult to collect from large bulls, bulls that have not been handled often, or if the facilities aren't available to adequately restrain the bulls. In these cases, a swab should be collected from inside the bull's nose (naso-pharyngeal swab).

Given the possibility that infected animals may shed bacteria intermittently, testing may not completely exclude the possibility of infection so results will be reported as "not detected" rather than "negative". Multiple negative tests from bulls of the same property will provide some confidence of a negative farm status.

The commercial animal health laboratories are offering this test. Your veterinarian can collect and submit these samples for you. The Dairy Cattle Veterinarians Branch of the NZVA have published guidance documents for your veterinarian.

MPI are working with the commercial laboratories to ensure that the testing process is robust, and any unusual results are followed up.

## POINTS TO NOTE

- Bulls must be adequately identified with lifetime EIDs (NAIT ID) and samples should be identified with these details.
- Keep a record of test results. Farmers purchasing or leasing bulls are likely to ask to see these results.
- NAIT records must be completed for all transfers of animals. If animal movements need to be traced for biosecurity reasons, having accurate NAIT records makes this job much faster and more reliable.
- Animals should be transported on clean trucks. Best practice is to hose out the trucks between each load, and they should be cleaned at the end of each day.
- Any disinfectant approved for use in farm dairies is satisfactory for disinfecting equipment used with animals provided it is made up, and used, according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Seek veterinary advice early if you are concerned about the health of your cattle.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/>

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/cow-health/mycoplasma-bovis/>

<https://fedfarm.org.nz>

<http://www.beeflambnz.com/news-views/interim-guidance-protecting-your-farm-mycoplasma-bovis>

<http://www.nzva.org.nz/>

<https://www.dcanz.com/>



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