



BRIEFING PAPER

Number 6081, 13 May 2015

Bovine TB statistics: Great Britain

By Carl Baker

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Summary

In 2014 there were 4,720 new herd incidents of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in Great Britain, and 4.2% of tests on TB-free herds led to TB-free status being withdrawn. This note presents statistics measuring the incidence of bovine TB in Great Britain. It gives data on the number of incidents of bovine TB among herds and animals in the five administrative regions for animal health in Great Britain, which are the North, East and West of England, plus Scotland and Wales. It lists the counties with the highest number of incidents of bovine TB in 2014 and presents trends in TB in non-bovine animals.

1. Measuring incidence of bovine tuberculosis

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) records incidents of bovine tuberculosis in two ways: as the number of herds affected with at least one case of bovine TB and as the number of animals slaughtered after testing positive for the disease. Incidents of bovine TB are identified through a diagnostic test called the Single Intradermal Comparative Cervical Tuberculin (SICCT) test, commonly known as the tuberculin “skin test”. This test is the internationally accepted standard for detection of infection with *M. bovis*, the bacterium that causes bovine TB. All cattle herds are subject to regular routine testing, the frequency of which is based on the local disease incidence. Cattle that test positive for the disease are known as “reactors” and are slaughtered.

2. National and regional bovine TB statistics

In April 2012, Defra announced changes and improvements to the methodology for recording incidents of bovine TB in Great Britain. The changes accompanied a transition in the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) IT systems, from the old “Vetnet” system to a new system called “Sam”. These changes have led to revisions in the historical series for incidents of bovine TB.¹ There were further revisions to bovine TB statistics in February 2014. This largely affected data on the number of herds that are not officially TB free and, to a lesser extent, the number of new herd incidents. These revisions do not

¹ See [“Bovine TB statistical notice, 3 April 2012”](#) and [“GB regional and county statistics”](#) on the Defra website.

affect the headline incidence figures presented here.² Data from January 2013 onwards are provisional.

Table 1: Herd and animal incidents of bovine TB in Great Britain, 2000-2014

	Herd incidents		Animal incidents (Cattle compulsorily slaughtered as reactors or contacts)		
	New herd incidents	% of tests on officially TB free herds which resulted in TB free status being withdrawn	Reactors	Direct contacts	Total
2000	1,738	3.1%	6,877	1,246	8,123
2001	802	5.2%	5,200	956	6,156
2002	3,323	4.7%	19,191	2,881	22,072
2003	3,214	3.8%	20,798	3,174	23,972
2004	3,341	4.0%	19,636	2,578	22,214
2005	3,665	4.9%	25,627	3,604	29,231
2006	3,530	4.1%	20,090	1,972	22,062
2007	4,188	4.7%	25,330	1,552	26,882
2008	5,011	5.6%	36,968	2,039	39,007
2009	4,599	4.9%	36,739	1,240	37,979
2010	4,723	4.9%	31,277	672	31,949
2011	4,912	5.2%	33,453	785	34,238
2012	5,133	4.7%	37,050	685	37,735
2013 P	4,810	4.5%	31,715	897	32,612
2014 P	4,720	4.2%	31,732	1,126	32,858

Data for 2001 are not comparable with other years. During the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, TB testing was significantly reduced, targeted to areas of higher risk.

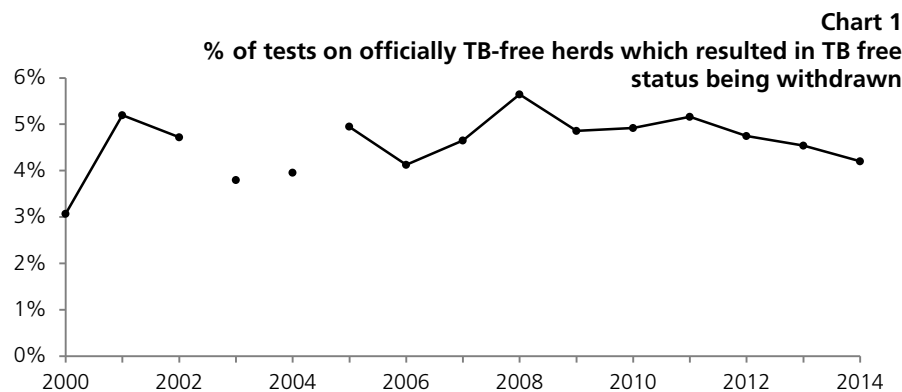
Data for 2002 are not comparable with earlier years. Testing was concentrated on herds which were overdue their tests due to the backlog

Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the incidence of tuberculosis \(TB\) in cattle in Great Britain](#)

Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the Incidence of Bovine TB in Great Britain](#)

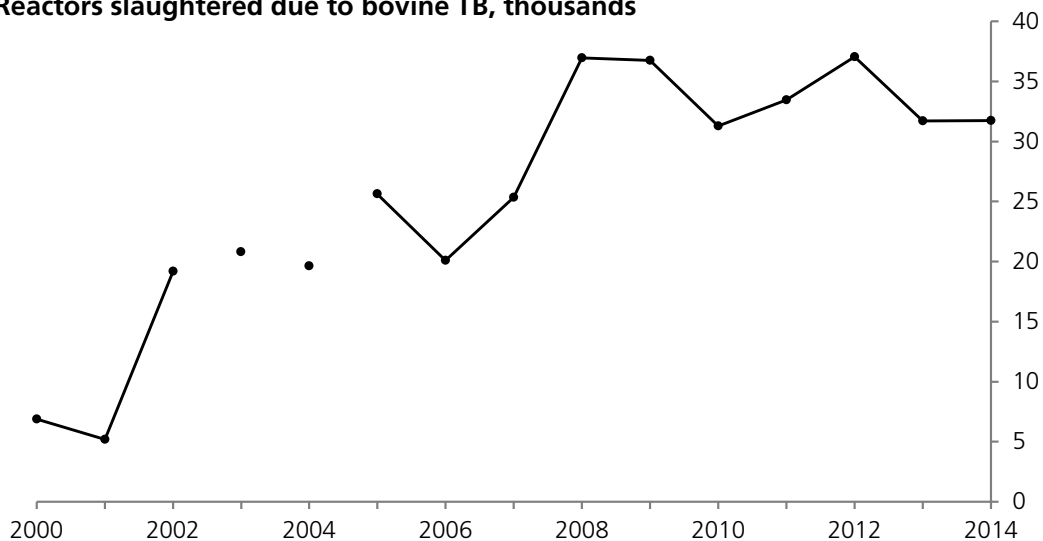
3. National bovine TB statistics

The revised annual national data on incidents of bovine TB in Great Britain are set out in **Table 1** (above), and **Charts 1 and 2** (below). See the notes to **Table 1** (above) for explanation of the discontinuity between 2000-2003 on these Charts.



² For further details see: [Revisions to bovine TB statistics-February 2014, Defra](#)

Chart 2
Reactors slaughtered due to bovine TB, thousands

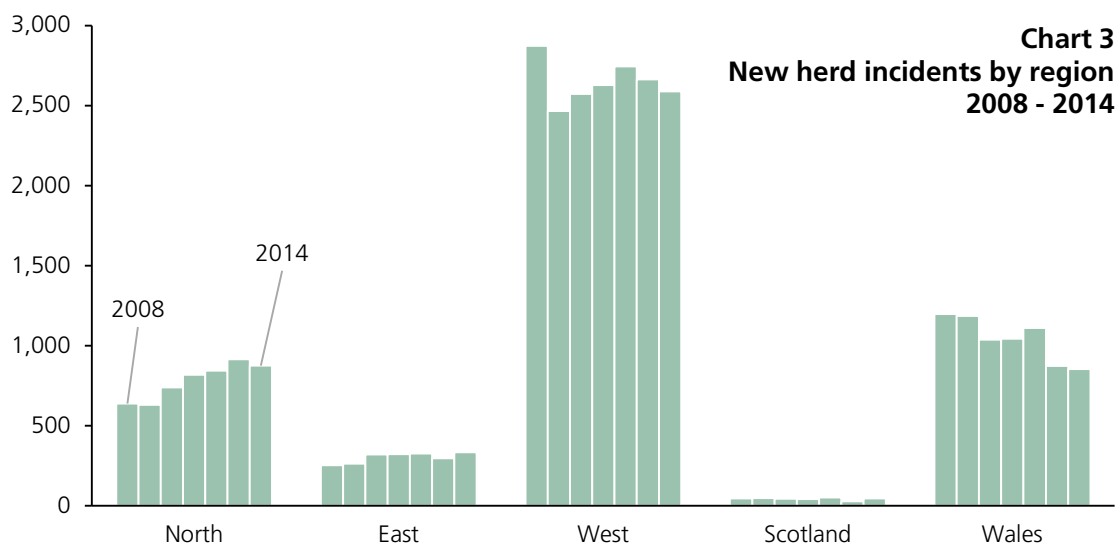


4. Regional bovine TB statistics

This section summarises bovine TB statistics using the existing regional and county data on bovine TB, in order to illustrate the distribution of the disease among cattle in Great Britain. Comparable data are available from 2008 onwards. Earlier data are available but, because of revisions mentioned above, they are not directly comparable to these figures.³

4.1 Herd incidents of bovine TB

Chart 3 and **Table 2** show the number of new herd incidents of bovine TB broken down by the regions of animal health administration in Great Britain.



Around 4,700 herds experienced new cases of bovine TB in Great Britain in 2014. This is slightly lower than 2013. Western England has

³ Earlier data is available on the following page: [Bovine TB, full county breakdown.](#)

been the region with the largest number of new herd incidents in every year since 1998, followed by Wales and Northern England. Scotland has the lowest incidence of bovine TB among the five regions.

Western England also had the highest number of new herd incidents per thousand cattle herds registered on Sam, at 148. By comparison, Wales registered 71 new incidents per thousand registered herds, and Northern England 38.

Table 2: New herd incidents of bovine TB by animal health region, 2008-2014

	North	East	West	England	Scotland	Wales	Great Britain
2008	639	253	2,873	3,765	47	1,198	5,010
2009	631	264	2,467	3,362	49	1,186	4,597
2010	739	321	2,574	3,634	45	1,039	4,718
2011	819	323	2,629	3,771	42	1,045	4,858
2012	845	327	2,751	3,923	54	1,112	5,089
2013	919	298	2,665	3,882	28	875	4,785
2014	876	334	2,589	3,799	47	854	4,700

Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the Incidence of Bovine TB in Great Britain](#)

Table 3 shows the counties with the largest number of herd incidents of bovine TB in 2014. Devon had the largest number of new herd incidents that year, followed by Cornwall, Dyfed, and Shropshire.

Table 3: Counties with the highest herd incidence of bovine TB, 2014

	Number of herd incidents
Devonshire	819
Cornwall	425
Dyfed	390
Shropshire	325
Hereford & Worcester	304
Somerset	288
Staffordshire	277
Powys	260
Wiltshire	200
Gloucestershire	196

Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the Incidence of Bovine TB in Great Britain](#)

4.2 Animal incidents of bovine TB

Chart 4 and **Table 4** show the number of animals slaughtered as reactors to bovine TB infection tests, broken down by the animal health administrative regions of Great Britain. In Northern England, the number of reactors slaughtered was 66% higher in 2014 than in 2008, while in Western England there were 18% fewer reactors slaughtered.

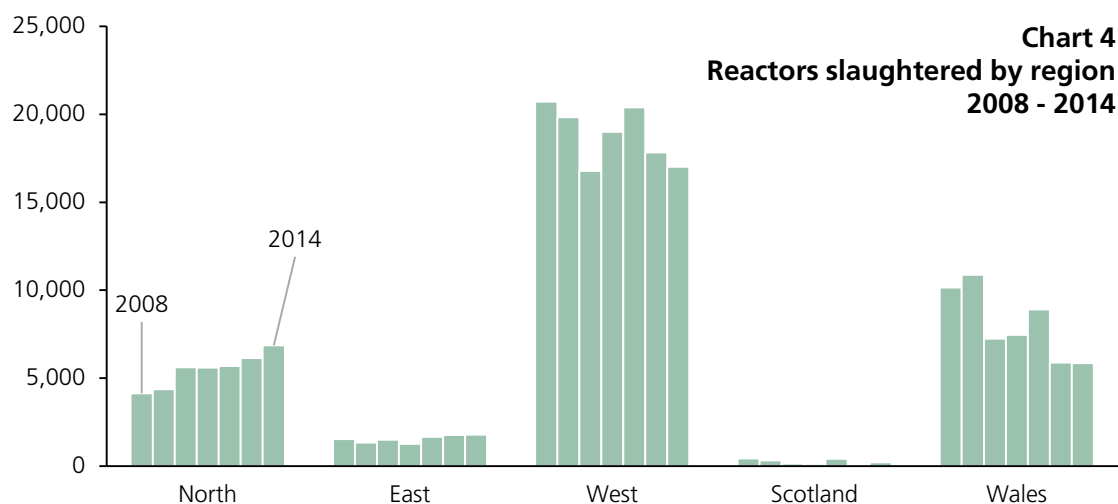


Table 4: Number of reactors slaughtered due to bovine TB, 2008-2014

	North	East	West	England	Scotland	Wales	Great Britain
2008	4,130	1,532	20,725	26,387	427	10,149	36,963
2009	4,365	1,336	19,836	25,537	328	10,872	36,737
2010	5,613	1,498	16,784	23,895	145	7,237	31,277
2011	5,601	1,263	19,006	25,870	123	7,460	33,453
2012	5,683	1,660	20,399	27,742	407	8,901	37,050
2013	6,141	1,775	17,822	25,738	94	5,883	31,715
2014	6,857	1,785	17,017	25,659	221	5,852	31,732

The trends and patterns observed in herd incidents of bovine TB are also evident in animal incidents of the disease. In 2014, around 32,000 cattle were slaughtered as reactors in Great Britain. The largest number of incidents occurred in Western England, followed by Northern England and Wales. Western England registered the highest level of total reactors slaughtered per thousand herds registered on Sam, at 973. Wales slaughtered 854 reactors per thousand herds, while in Northern England the figure was 297.

Table 5 shows the counties with the largest number of animal incidents of bovine TB in 2014. Devon had the largest number of animal incidents that year, followed by Staffordshire, Dyfed, and Cornwall.

Table 5: Counties with the highest number of reactors slaughtered, 2014

	Number of reactors slaughtered
Devonshire	5,861
Staffordshire	3,011
Dyfed	2,958
Cornwall	2,875
Hereford & Worcs	1,838
Shropshire	1,690
Somerset	1,576
Cheshire	1,528
Powys	1,389
Wiltshire	1,340

Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the Incidence of Bovine TB in Great Britain](#)

4.3 Incidents of TB in other animals

Table 6 shows the number of non-bovine TB cases in animals in Great Britain since 1997. The table shows that trends in non-bovine tuberculosis vary by species. Among wild deer, the number of cases increased in 2004 and, although it has been falling gradually since 2008, has remained at a higher level than the years before 2004. The number of incidents among domestic cats and pigs has followed a generally upward trend since 2004, but has decreased in the last two years. The largest number of incidents among domestic cats in a single year during the last decade occurred in 2009. Among domestic pigs, the peak year during the last decade was 2011.

Table 6: Incidents of M. bovis infection in non-bovine animals, 1997-2013

	Farmed Deer	Park Deer	Wild Deer	Domestic Cat	Domestic Dog	Domestic Pig	Alpaca	Llama	Sheep	Goat	Ferret	Farmed Wild Boar
1997	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1998	1	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1999	0	3	7	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
2000	1	2	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2001	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2002	8	2	3	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
2003	8	0	14	2	0	8	2	1	0	0	0	0
2004	0	2	42	6	1	1	1	0	3	0	0	0
2005	1	1	31	13	0	12	0	1	2	0	3	0
2006	5	17	29	14	0	2	1	8	0	0	0	2
2007	1	4	20	15	1	5	4	16	0	2	0	0
2008	1	2	31	18	1	10	13	9	1	33	0	0
2009	1	0	18	26	3	23	68	0	5	0	0	0
2010	1	6	15	23	2	29	43	0	13	1	0	1
2011	6	0	17	19	0	44	17	0	35	0	0	1
2012	2	0	12	9	1	18	35	3	16	2	0	0
2013 ^P	11	0	8	16	1	15	25	3	3	3	1	0

Notes

1. Submissions are from individual animals, not premises i.e. several submissions may be from the same premises.
2. Data for 2013 is provisional.

Source

[Defra. Statistics for TB in non-bovine animals, 1997-2013](#)

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