



**BRIEFING PAPER**

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# Bovine TB statistics: Great Britain

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**Inside:**

1. Measuring incidence of bovine tuberculosis
2. National and regional bovine TB statistics



# Contents

<b>1. Measuring incidence of bovine tuberculosis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. National and regional bovine TB statistics</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 National bovine TB statistics	4
2.2 Regional bovine TB statistics	5
Animal incidents of bovine TB	7
2.3 Incidents of TB in other animals	8

## Summary

In 2016, there were 4,505 new herd incidents of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in Great Britain, and 39,364 animals were slaughtered due to bovine TB. This briefing paper presents statistics for 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 administrative regions and nations for animal health in Great Britain, which are the Midlands, the North, South East and South West of England, plus Scotland and Wales. It lists the counties with the highest number of incidents of bovine TB in 2016 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.

Bovine TB can be spread by badgers and the Government has trialed badger culls in several areas at high risk of bovine TB. The effectiveness of badger culling as a means of controlling TB in cattle remains contentious. For more information, see Commons Debate pack 2016-0152 [Badger culling and bovine TB](#) and Library briefing paper 06837 [Badgers: culls in England](#).

# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 affect the headline incidence figures presented here.<sup>2</sup> Further changes were made following a consultation in 2015. The most significant of these was the introduction of two headline statistics to describe the frequency of the disease in the cattle population: a revised herd incidence measure, and a new herd prevalence measure.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.1 National bovine TB statistics

Annual national data on incidents of bovine TB in Great Britain are set out in the table and charts below. There were 23% more new herd incidents recorded in 2016 than in 2005, and 32% more animals slaughtered. The highest number of new herd incidents was recorded in 2012, and the highest number of animals slaughtered in 2008.

HERD AND ANIMAL INCIDENTS OF BOVINE TB GREAT BRITAIN, 2005-2016						
	Herd incidents			Animals slaughtered (Cattle compulsorily slaughtered)		
	Herds not officially TB free <sup>1</sup>	New herd incidents <sup>2</sup>	Official TB free status withdrawn <sup>3</sup>	Reactors	Direct contacts	Total <sup>4</sup>
2005	2,305	3,665	2,308	25,628	3,604	29,824
2006	2,369	3,531	2,304	20,075	1,967	22,520
2007	2,914	4,190	2,549	25,294	1,548	27,394
2008	3,777	5,012	3,094	36,967	2,039	39,675
2009	3,228	4,600	2,848	36,739	1,240	38,696
2010	3,325	4,721	3,011	31,276	672	32,378
2011	3,804	4,914	3,165	33,451	785	34,675
2012	4,220	5,115	3,452	37,050	685	37,993
2013	3,793	4,813	3,264	31,715	897	32,791
2014	3,525	4,718	3,332	31,732	1,133	33,031
2015	3,707	4,849	3,384	35,060	991	36,252
2016	3,603	4,505	2,948	37,451	1,733	39,364

Notes:

1. At the end of the period, due to a bovine TB incident
2. Herds previously officially TB free which had a TB incident during the period considered (including incidents where OTB status withdrawn for epidemiological reasons in Wales)
3. New herd incidents where OTF status was withdrawn from herd following detection through testing of signs of TB in at least one animal (not including OTF withdrawals for epidemiological reasons in Wales)

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

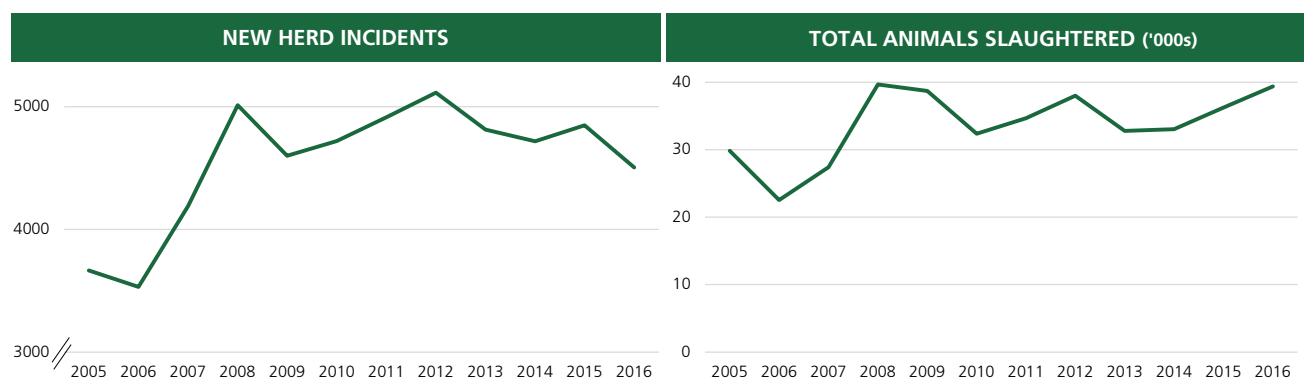
<sup>2</sup> For further details see: [Revisions to bovine TB statistics-February 2014, Defra](#)

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: [Changes to national statistics on TB in cattle in GB – December 2015](#)

## 5 Bovine TB statistics: Great Britain

4. Prior to April 2017, some animals were incorrectly classified as inconclusive reactors (testing positive but not strongly enough to be deemed reactors); these are now reported under "total animals slaughtered". This means the total is greater than the sum of 'reactors' and 'direct contacts'.

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



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

Defra provides an [interactive online map](#) showing herd incidents of bovine TB in England and Wales for different years (2013-2017).

## 2.2 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.<sup>4</sup>

### Herd prevalence and incidents of bovine TB

The table below shows the prevalence of bovine TB in herds in the regions and nations of animal health administration in Great Britain. Prevalence is calculated as the proportion of all registered herds that are not officially TB free at the end of the reporting period due to a bovine TB incident.

	HERD PREVALENCE: HERDS NOT OFFICIALLY TB FREE AT END OF PERIOD AS % OF HERDS REGISTERED ON SAM							
	Great Britain	Wales	Scotland	England	North	Midlands	South West	South East
2008	4.39%	6.68%	0.18%	4.85%	0.25%	6.36%	10.77%	0.59%
2009	3.83%	5.48%	0.15%	4.33%	0.28%	5.86%	9.34%	0.60%
2010	4.00%	5.50%	0.12%	4.60%	0.50%	5.81%	10.04%	0.84%
2011	4.73%	6.19%	0.07%	5.49%	0.57%	7.22%	11.60%	1.13%
2012	5.32%	7.24%	0.20%	6.05%	0.79%	7.99%	12.74%	1.03%
2013	4.78%	5.02%	0.15%	5.78%	0.81%	7.60%	12.30%	1.03%
2014	4.58%	4.98%	0.22%	5.56%	0.78%	6.68%	12.50%	1.12%
2015	4.87%	5.22%	0.18%	5.96%	0.69%	6.67%	13.75%	1.81%
2016	4.74%	4.95%	0.19%	5.82%	0.77%	6.82%	13.00%	1.88%

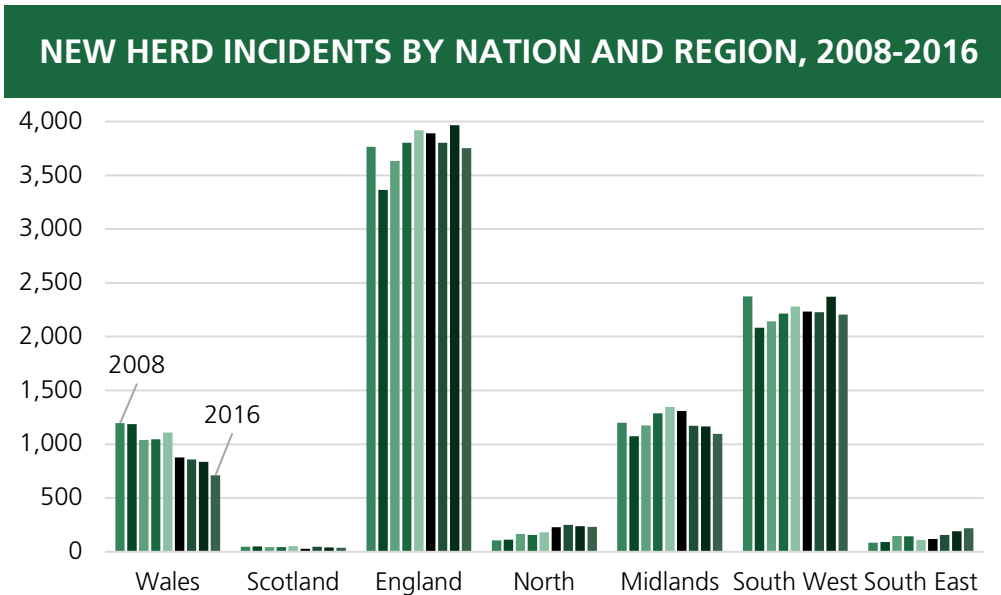
Source: Defra, [Latest statistics on the Incidence of Bovine TB in Great Britain](#)

<sup>4</sup> Earlier data is available from the regional files [on the GOV.UK website](#)



There is substantial regional variation in the proportion of herds affected by bovine TB. The disease has been most prevalent among herds in the South West, followed by the Midlands.

The chart and table below show the number of new herd incidents of bovine TB broken down by regions and nations.



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

	Great Britain	Wales	Scotland	England	North	Midlands	South West	South East
2008	5,012	1,198	47	3,766	105	1,200	2,375	86
2009	4,600	1,186	49	3,363	113	1,074	2,084	92
2010	4,721	1,039	45	3,632	167	1,176	2,143	146
2011	4,914	1,046	43	3,802	157	1,287	2,213	145
2012	5,115	1,109	54	3,919	182	1,347	2,280	110
2013	4,813	877	28	3,890	229	1,308	2,233	120
2014	4,718	858	47	3,804	251	1,171	2,226	156
2015	4,849	836	40	3,965	238	1,165	2,371	191
2016	4,505	711	37	3,751	232	1,097	2,204	218

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

Around 4,505 herds experienced new cases of bovine TB in Great Britain in 2016. This is slightly lower than in 2015. South West England has been the region with the largest number of new herd incidents in every year since 2008, followed by the Midlands and Wales. Scotland had the lowest incidence of bovine TB during this period. This corresponds to the figures for herd prevalence above.

The table below shows the 10 counties with the highest number of herd incidents of bovine TB in 2016. Devonshire had the largest number of new herd incidents that year, followed by Cornwall, Staffordshire and Somerset.

**COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF HERD INCIDENTS, 2016**

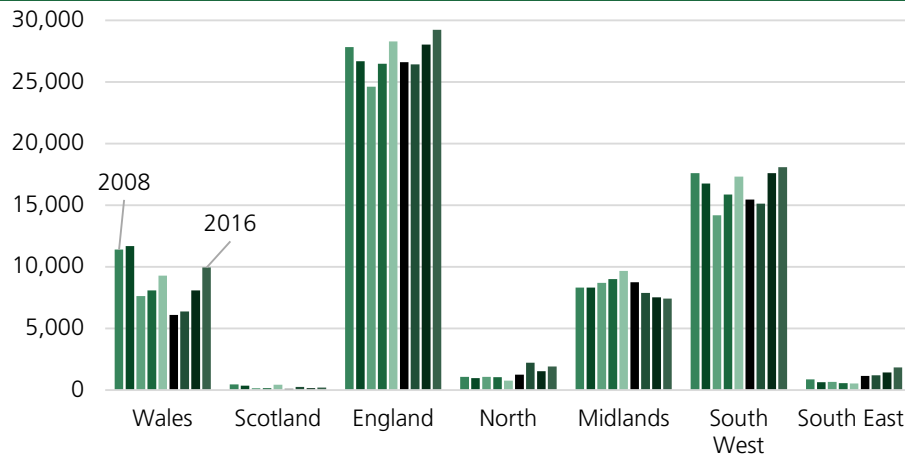
County	Incidents
1 Devonshire	820
2 Cornwall	452
3 Staffordshire	299
4 Somerset	284
5 Hereford & Worcester	274
6 Shropshire	242
7 Wiltshire	195
8 Gloucestershire	175
9 Dorset	153
10 Pembrokeshire	153

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

**Animal incidents of bovine TB**

The chart and table below show the total number of animals slaughtered due to bovine TB infection tests, broken down by the animal health administrative regions and nations of Great Britain.

**TOTAL ANIMALS SLAUGHTERED BY NATION AND REGION, 2008-2016**



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

**ANIMALS SLAUGHTERED DUE TO BOVINE TB: DETAILS**

	Great Britain	Wales	Scotland	England	North	Midlands	South West	South East
2008	39,675	11,400	460	27,815	1,053	8,321	17,587	854
2009	38,696	11,671	357	26,668	976	8,319	16,743	630
2010	32,378	7,618	160	24,600	1,069	8,697	14,177	657
2011	34,675	8,068	140	26,467	1,037	8,994	15,872	564
2012	37,993	9,289	418	28,286	771	9,673	17,319	523
2013	32,791	6,102	95	26,594	1,256	8,749	15,458	1,131
2014	33,031	6,378	240	26,413	2,220	7,876	15,125	1,192
2015	36,252	8,086	135	28,030	1,514	7,512	17,590	1,414
2016	39,364	9,944	187	29,230	1,914	7,428	18,067	1,821

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

Across Great Britain, 1% fewer animals were slaughtered due to Bovine TB in 2016 than in 2008. This figure hides substantial variation between regions: while Scotland saw a 59% reduction in compulsory slaughter over this period, the South East of England saw a 113% increase.

The trends and patterns observed in animal incidents of bovine TB correspond to those observed in herd incidents, as described above. The South West was the region with the highest number of animals slaughtered and Scotland the lowest.

The table below shows the counties with the largest number of animal incidents of bovine TB in 2014. Devonshire had the largest number of animal incidents that year, followed by Carmarthenshire, Cornwall, and Staffordshire.

#### COUNTIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF ANIMALS SLAUGHTERED, 2016

County	Animals
1 Devonshire	7,052
2 Carmarthenshire	3,597
3 Cornwall	3,420
4 Staffordshire	2,948
5 Pembrokeshire	2,672
6 Somerset	2,138
7 Wiltshire	1,891
8 Hereford & Worcester	1,587
9 Cheshire	1,562
10 Shropshire	1,419

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

## 2.3 Incidents of TB in other animals

The table below shows the number of non-bovine TB cases in animals in Great Britain in 2016. The table shows that TB was most common in goats, and that most cases occurred in England.

#### TOTAL ANIMALS REMOVED DUE TO TB<sup>1</sup>, 2016

	S A Camelids <sup>2</sup>	Sheep	Goats	Pigs	Deer	Other
England	46	1	994	16	6	0
Scotland	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wales	15	0	0	4	0	0
<b>GB</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>994</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

Notes:

1. Animals removed as BT test reactors plus other animals removed due to BT (including direct contacts)

2. South American camelids: llama, alpaca, vicuna and guanaco

Source:

Defra, [Bovine TB in non-bovine species](#), combined 2016



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