



Last updated: 15 January 2019

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents

<i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> 2018 Response	1
Frequently Asked Questions	1
What, Where, How	3
What is <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> ?.....	3
What animals does it affect?	3
Where is it in New Zealand?	3
What has happened so far?	3
Looking out for <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i>	4
What should farmers do to protect their farms and animals?	4
How can I recognise <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> in my herd?.....	4
I think I may have infected animals - who should I contact?.....	4
Can I move animals off my farm?.....	5
What should trucking companies be doing? How do I know the trucks coming onto my property are safe?	5
Is it safe for contractors, transport operators, and others who come from infected farms to come to my farm?.....	5
Can we eradicate – get rid of – this disease?.....	5
How did it get here?	5
How does it spread?.....	5
Can it live in soil or silage?	6
Can it be spread across farm borders?	6
Can it be spread through feed?.....	6
Can an infection lie dormant or will it show immediately in every case?	6
Does it pass from mothers to calves?	6
Given that semen and embryos are considered to be a possible pathway, why allow them into New Zealand?.....	7
MPI Management of Affected Properties.....	7
What happens to infected animals?.....	7
What happens to the meat from animals from the infected farms?	7
Can I eat the meat/drink the milk of cattle from infected farms?	8
What is MPI doing?	8
What legal directions are issued under the Biosecurity Act 1993?	8

Why can't I know who is being contacted by MPI?.....	9
Why aren't you putting restrictions on all neighbouring properties to infected properties?	9
Why aren't you putting restrictions on all the trace farms and neighbouring properties?	9
Why aren't you stopping transport of stock between North and South Islands?	10
Have neighbours been informed/ Are neighbours under any controls?.....	10
Is there a risk it may be present in other areas? How likely is this?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
How do I know that any stock I'm buying (particularly calves) is free from <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> infection?	10
How can I assure people that any stock I'm seeking to sell (particularly calves) are free from <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> infection?.....	10
Protecting your Business	10
How should lease bulls be managed once they are returned to their home farm?	10
What can farm service providers do to protect their business and customers?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
What sort of impact is it likely to have on the New Zealand dairy and cattle farming industries?	11
What are the implications for management of winter grazing?.....	11
Testing	11
How do you test for <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> ?	11
Why is it taking so long to get us test results?	11
How accurate are the available tests?	12
Do test results show immediately?	Error! Bookmark not defined.
What will the National Milk Surveillance Programme tell us?	12
Why do you need to test my animals even though they have already been tested in the national milk surveillance?	12
Where can I get my animals tested?	13
If meat processors see animals with suspect symptoms arriving for slaughter anywhere around the country, can they be tested for <i>Mycoplasma bovis</i> ?	13
Support for affected farmers during tough times	13
Need help?.....	13
Compensation	13
How do I find out about Biosecurity Act Compensation?	13
Further Information for Affected Farmers.....	14
How do I get more information?.....	14
Who do I contact if I have any questions?.....	14
More Information.....	14
Where do I find more information?	14

What, Where, How

What is *Mycoplasma bovis*?

Mycoplasma bovis is a bacterium that causes disease in cattle. It had never been found in New Zealand until the current outbreak. The disease has productivity and animal welfare implications as it can cause untreatable mastitis, abortions, pneumonia and arthritis, and can result in significant losses to beef and dairy producers. *Mycoplasma bovis* does not infect people and it does not present any food safety concerns. It is widespread internationally, and other dairy- and meat-producing countries manage it and trade in animal products. Its detection in New Zealand does not present any trade concerns.

What animals does it affect?

Mycoplasma bovis primarily affects cattle. Other animals are very unlikely to be infected. It does not cause disease in humans, and is not a food-safety risk.

Where is it in New Zealand?

Cattle infected with *Mycoplasma bovis* are in herds throughout New Zealand. The majority of infected farms are linked to one another by live cattle movements. A relatively small number of farms have become infected by receiving milk containing *Mycoplasma bovis* from an already-infected farm and feeding it to calves.

What has happened so far?

On 22 July 2017 *Mycoplasma bovis* was first detected on a South Canterbury property in the Oamaru area. This bacterium has never previously been identified in New Zealand.

Since the initial detection, infection has been found on a number of other farms via bulk milk testing and tracing and testing of farms associated to infected farms via live cattle movements and movement of milk.

MPI continues tracing cattle movements, and when they are identified farmers are contacted and given directions on what steps they should take, and whether samples will be taken from cattle on their farm. All trace animals found are being sent to slaughter for testing, and testing is carried out at herd level to determine if the bacteria has spread.

All cattle are culled from farms where there is high suspicion of infection. In most cases the bacteria is found to be present. However, on other farms herd-level testing indicates it's very likely that the infection has spread or is spreading, but the bacteria is not found. These later farms are highly likely to contain the bacteria and therefore must be depopulated for eradication to be successful. After a farm is depopulated, a plan is put in place to decontaminate and repopulate them, with the assistance of the Cleaning and Disinfection and Recovery Teams. Some equipment and parts of farms require a 60-day stand down period in addition to cleaning and disinfection, or a 60-day stand down period, to reduce the likelihood that sufficient numbers of bacteria will survive and cause infection in newly-acquired cattle to extremely low. The aim is to get farmers back to business as usual as soon as possible, while ensuring the requirements for *Mycoplasma bovis* eradication are met.

Surveillance, monitoring, and testing will continue to take place as part of the national surveillance programme. For more information refer to the MPI website - <http://mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/>

How do I protect my farm from *Mycoplasma bovis*?

What should farmers do to protect their farms and animals?

Keep your **NAIT movements up-to-date** and **accurate**. All farmers should take the time to **update NAIT movement data online**.

MPI are able to rapidly trace cattle movements to and from properties where farmers have kept their NAIT movement records up-to-date and accurate. NAIT is one of the most important tools used by MPI to control the spread of *Mycoplasma bovis*.

Purchase or lease cattle that are lifetime traceable in NAIT. Cattle that have been on fewer properties are less likely to bring any infectious disease onto your farm. When leasing or purchasing cattle get as much information as you can from the vendor about where they have come from, particularly if you plan to keep these cattle in your breeding herd. Also talk with the vendor and/or your vet to understand if they are fit for the intended purpose.

Keep accurate, up-to-date records of cattle grazing movements within your farm. If you have cattle on farm that have different levels of infectious disease risk (i.e. home-bred cattle compared to cattle purchased from other farms) manage them in separate groups.

Basic farm biosecurity measures include monitoring of visitors who interact with cattle, washing and disinfecting of footwear and gear worn between farms, checking and cleaning if necessary any farm vehicles prior to leaving the farm, restricting (as much as possible) movement and mixing of cattle, and keeping accurate, up-to-date animal health records.

Good on-farm biosecurity information resources have been produced from industry:

[Beef+Lamb NZ Dry stock biosecurity guidelines](#)

[DairyNZ Farm biosecurity](#)

When should I suspect *Mycoplasma bovis* and what should I do?

How can I recognise *Mycoplasma bovis* in my herd?

Farmers should look out for:

- Mastitis,
- arthritis in cows and calves,
- late-term abortion,
- pneumonia in calves.
- See [Mycoplasma bovis - what to look for](#)

I think I may have infected animals - who should I contact?

Contact your vet in the first instance, otherwise contact the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline on 0800 80 99 66. You will be asked for your name, contact details, and any other details you wish to provide (all details are confidential). An investigating veterinarian will phone you back and help with assessment and follow-up of your case. Testing for *Mycoplasma bovis* as part of the response is paid for by MPI.

Can I move cattle off my farm?

Yes, unless you have had a legal notice (Notice of Direction or Restricted Place Notice) issued to you, you can move cattle freely.

Farms under legal restriction cannot move stock without permission from MPI. Permits are given to move animals to slaughter until the legal notice has been revoked.

What should trucking companies be doing? How do I know the trucks coming onto my property are safe?

Trucking companies should work with the farmers to meet their farm biosecurity requirements.

All the properties under Restricted Place Notice require permits to move cattle. The permits require that that trucks are cleaned and disinfected after the cattle have been moved.

Is it safe for contractors, transport operators, and others who come from infected farms to come to my farm?

It is absolutely safe for tradies, transportation companies, emergency services and rural service providers to come from infected farms to other properties as they will have undertaken a stringent cleaning and disinfection protocol upon leaving an infected farm if there was any potential for contact with cattle or milk.

All infected farms are under strict legal controls under the Biosecurity Act. These controls include a comprehensive cleaning and disinfection protocol for vehicles that has been provided to them by MPI. This protocol ensures that vehicles pose an extremely low disease transmission risk.

Can we eradicate – get rid of – this disease?

At this point in time, that's what we're aiming for. No other country has ever tried to eradicate *Mycoplasma bovis*. The most recent report from the Technical Advisory Group states that they believe that based on what is presently known about *Mycoplasma bovis* in New Zealand eradication remains possible from a technical point of view. The joint MPI/Dairy industry National Milk Surveillance Programme released in December 2018 instilled strong confidence of the eradication effort with only three farms returned PCR positive results out of over 11, 000 dairy farms.

Also, a voluntary Calf Rearing Survey was carried out in the last quarter of 2018. No infected farms were found among the 150 that took part in the survey.

How did it get here?

Seven possible means of entry are being considered – imported live cattle, imported frozen semen, imported embryos, imported veterinary medicines and biological products, imported feed, imported used farm equipment and other imported live animals. It is possible that we will never be able to identify the entry pathway. MPI is tracing movements of possible risk goods onto the affected properties as part of this investigation. To date we have not determined the route of entry.

How does it spread?

Mycoplasma bovis is mainly spread between cattle in close contact. Generally prolonged or repeated contact with infected cattle is required for the disease to be transmitted to previously uninfected cattle. It is also able to be transmitted to calves fed milk containing the bacteria.

There is a risk of spread in infection between farms through sharing of equipment that has been in contact with milk containing the bacteria such as mobile milking machines and calf feeders. It is particularly important to clean and disinfect milking equipment that is shared between properties or milking herds.

This disease is not spread via wind. Soil, urine, faeces, and water are not regarded as significant transmitters of the disease.

M. bovis survives best in cool, damp environments. It is readily killed by heat, drying and many common disinfectants. Survival time in the field is likely to be shorter than in the laboratory due to exposure to UV light, temperature fluctuations and the drying effect of moving air.

Can it live in soil, effluent or silage?

Mycoplasma bovis **does not** survive in soil for a long period. Paddocks that have been sprayed with effluent or that have had effluent applied as part of a cropping programme do not require any stand down period for the purposes of *Mycoplasma bovis* control.

Properly made silage with a pH of 4.5 or below and wrapped correctly is not a risk for transmitting *Mycoplasma bovis*. Silage can be tested to ensure it has reached this standard.

Spread of *Mycoplasma bovis* through imported feed is not known to be a *Mycoplasma bovis* transmission risk.

Can it be spread across farm borders?

None of the infected properties are known to have been infected by over-the-fence transmission. Farms with cattle neighbouring infected farms undergo testing because of the risk of straying stock between neighbouring properties. This risk can be managed by planning stock rotation with neighbours to keep neighbouring paddocks vacant or by using an electric fence hotwire to keep cattle away from boundary fences.

Can it be spread through feed?

Feeding calves milk containing the bacteria is a known cause spread of infection.

Can *Mycoplasma bovis* infection be present in the absence of clinical signs?

Some cattle may be sub-clinically infected with *Mycoplasma bovis*, and never show signs or symptoms of disease. Other cattle will show signs disease, either in the early or late stages of infection. Onset of clinical signs can be triggered by increased stress, such as transport, calving, the start of milking, or mixing with other cattle.

The movement of live cattle from infected farms to uninfected farms is the primary way the disease spreads between properties, irrespective of whether or not infected cattle are showing clinical signs.

Does it pass from mothers to calves?

Cow-to-calf transfer during birth is considered a very unlikely event and has never been confirmed. However, calves fed milk containing the bacteria can easily contract the disease.

Given that semen and embryos are considered to be a possible entry pathway, why allow them into New Zealand?

Semen is considered a low risk due to a long international history of safe trade and strict hygiene requirements around collection and use. Currently we do not consider that there is enough justification to stop semen and embryo imports, however we are continually assessing the risk. To put some context around the current situation, the *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak is New Zealand's first detection, and semen has been imported for many years at the rate of around 250,000 straws a season. If semen importation was a significant risk factor, we could expect to see a lot more infection than we are.

Farmers can continue to make their own decisions around the use of artificial insemination (AI). AI providers have developed biosecurity protocols for use following the outbreak. Ask your technician to tell you about them.

MPI Management of Affected Properties

What happens to infected cattle?

Cattle on infected farms have restrictions in place to prevent them coming into contact with other cattle. Cattle may be euthanised by the farmer on farm as required as part of normal business or for welfare reasons, though a permit is required. As *Mycoplasma bovis* is not a food safety risk, infected animals that are fit for transport go for slaughter to meat processing plants.

Farmers placed under legal controls must have a permit from MPI to move animals to other farms (if accepted as a permitted activity) or direct to slaughter. Each permit includes requirements for cleaning and disinfection of the stock truck/s involved.

Farms may opt to work through a phased eradication process IF their farming model allows (phased eradication is permitted on a case-by-case basis). Dairy farms can continue to milk through to the end of the season and beef finishing farms will be able to continue to grow their animals out to target weight.

What happens to the meat from cattle from the infected farms?

Mycoplasma bovis is not a food safety risk and there are no restrictions on the meat.

Mycoplasma bovis is common in many food-producing nations (like Australia, the United States, and in Europe). In these nations, infected cattle that aren't showing symptoms are processed for human consumption.

Most cattle that have been culled as part of depopulation of infected farms have been processed at meat processing plants. They were assessed by farmers prior to transport to ensure they were fit for transport, and if required by a veterinarian.

At processing plants, MPI veterinarians assess the health of animals before slaughter. Animals are never used for human consumption if they are sick, or are severely injured, or have medicine in their system. This process is a requirement of New Zealand law.

After animals are slaughtered, the carcass and organs are also subject to meat inspection. This process is to ensure the meat is safe and suitable for consumption.

All meat processors have a Risk Organism Response Plan (RORP) to work to when handling stock exposed to an unwanted organism. This plan includes how to manage the waste safely for the environment.

The meat from unhealthy animals can be rendered or used in pet food.

Can I eat the meat/drink the milk of cattle from infected farms?

Yes, *Mycoplasma bovis* is not a food safety risk. There is no issue with eating beef or drinking milk from infected herds.

What is MPI doing?

A full biosecurity response is underway. The National Response Headquarters is in Wellington and there are Field Headquarters in Oamaru, Invercargill, Ashburton and Hamilton where MPI and AsureQuality staff are now based.

Response staff are working closely with affected farmers and their veterinarians, as well as with industry stakeholders, including DairyNZ, Dairy Companies Association of NZ (DCANZ), Beef+LambNZ, NZ Veterinary Association, Dairy Vets, and Federated Farmers.

MPI has a three-pronged strategy to managing this outbreak

Contain – Minimise any further spread of the disease.

The farms under Restricted Place Notices require permits to move cattle and to transport cattle direct to slaughter at agreed premises. The meat processor has procedures in place to clean and disinfect the transport trucks before they leave the processor.

Each farm has farm biosecurity measures in place to clean and disinfect equipment and vehicles that may have come into contact with cattle.

Survey – Determine the distribution of *Mycoplasma bovis* across farms.

To be able to make decisions we need to understand the spread of infection. MPI has a multi-layered approach that involves testing samples from farms that have received cattle from or supplied cattle to infected farms, testing samples from farms that border infected farms, testing samples from suspect clinical cases of disease, and a series of nation-wide surveys. So far, around 250,000 samples have been tested.

MPI is working with NAIT to trace the movements of cattle to and from the restricted farms

Assess the feasibility of eradication – Determine if it is possible to cost-effectively eradicate.

MPI is working with industry and international experts to understand the impacts of the disease and the potential costs of eradication. Based on all available information, we will continually assess the feasibility of eradication.

What legal directions are issued under the Biosecurity Act 1993?

Restricted Place (RP) Notice issued under section 130 of the Biosecurity Act 1993.

- RP Notices are issued on areas of land that are known to have, or are suspected of having, *Mycoplasma bovis* present.
- The RP Notice prohibits all unauthorised movements of cattle and other risk goods onto and off the area of land to minimise the likelihood of the infection spreading from the property.
- Any movement of cattle requires a permit from MPI.
- AsureQuality staff are ensuring cleaning and disinfection and permit protocols are being followed.

- Any incidents of non-compliance are followed up by MPI Compliance – which sits outside of the *Mycoplasma Bovis* response.

Notice of Direction (NoD) issued under section 122 of the Biosecurity Act 1993.

- NoDs are issued to a PERSON when an inspector or authorised person considers that movement of stock and other risk goods from a property poses a risk of spreading *Mycoplasma bovis*. For example, when animals from an infected property have been moved to that property but testing has not yet taken place or results of testing are pending.
- NoDs are also issued when specific directions need to be given, for example to cull cattle.
- In this response, the NoD usually does not restrict movement of stock or goods onto the farm but cattle and risk goods can only move off the farm with a permit.
- Other steps such as cleaning and disinfection of vehicles may be required.
- Any incidents of non-compliance are followed up by MPI.

Why can't I know who is being contacted by MPI?

MPI is contacting individual farms where there is potential risk of the disease being present. It's a case of no news is good news. If you don't hear from MPI then you or your farm are not of immediate concern to MPI.

If, however, you think you may have animals sourced from a risk property, that MPI doesn't know about, please advise MPI as soon as possible and we will check it out. Call 0800 80 99 66 or email mbovis2017_liaison@mpi.govt.nz

In particular we are keen to hear from any farmers who have received animals from the Southern Centre Dairy Group Limited. We also would like to hear from people who have used milk for calf feed from this company.

MPI will not name affected properties without their consent. This protection of privacy is the law under the Privacy Act.

We are encouraging farmers under controls or investigation to talk to their neighbours and customers, but we are not revealing details of individual farms to the public.

Why aren't you putting restrictions on all properties that undergo testing?

We only impose legal restrictions on properties when we know or have reason to suspect that there are infected cattle on the property. MPI may suspect that a *Mycoplasma bovis* infection exists for a number of reasons, including evidence of movement of high-risk goods (i.e. live cattle or milk) from an infected property to the property in question, and/or a result from testing that leads us to believe disease could be present on the property in question. It's quite a complex legal process with some very tough conditions to meet and we can't place restrictions on properties or leave them in place without there being justification.

Why aren't you putting restrictions on all of the trace farms and neighbouring properties?

As stated above, the imposition of legal restrictions are considered on a case by case basis on an analysis of whether or not a *Mycoplasma bovis* infection exists or is likely to exist on the property. We do impose legal restrictions on neighbouring properties and trace farms if we suspect that an infection may be present.

MPI procedurally slaughters and tests trace animals that have been moved from known infected properties, and undertakes a testing regime on the remaining herd/mob to work out their infection status.

Why aren't you stopping transport of stock between North and South Islands?

It's a question of risk. To stop movement out of the South Island to the North Island we'd need to impose a much larger movement control – creating a Controlled Area. Due to the nature of how we trade stock, infected animals were already present in the North Island at the time Government made the decision to proceed with eradication.

Have Restricted Place Notice farm neighbours been informed?

When farms are placed under an RP Notice, all neighbouring properties are notified. There have been no known incidences of spread of infection over-the-fence, however we notify neighbours as there is a risk that cattle may have broken through boundary fences and there may have been prolonged contact between cattle on neighbouring properties. Properties neighbouring those under RP will be tested to ensure they are free of infection.

How do I know that any cattle I'm buying (particularly calves) are free from *Mycoplasma bovis* infection?

At this point in time, MPI believes that the infection is contained and that tracing and surveillance activities will identify all farms of interest. The vast majority of cattle across New Zealand are free of cattle.

Farms that have been placed under legal notices WILL NOT be able to sell stock.

In general, buying in healthy-looking cattle directly from a single property that were also born on the source property as confirmed by their NAIT records is the best way of reducing the risk of introducing any infectious disease to your farm.

DairyNZ has developed a [pre-purchase checklist](https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/5787884/myco-bovis-pre-purchase-checklist-aug-2017.pdf) to help when you're buying stock -

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/media/5787884/myco-bovis-pre-purchase-checklist-aug-2017.pdf>

My stock have been tested, do I need to mark that I'm under surveillance on the ASD (Q 2.3)?

No. The surveillance lists that are referred to in this question are specific tools under the Animal Products Act 1999 (APA) and relate to risks to human health, such as high residues or beef measles. If you are under surveillance for any purpose under the APA you still need to answer 'Yes' to this question.

How can I assure people that any stock I'm seeking to sell (particularly calves) are free from *Mycoplasma bovis* infection?

At any one point in time, all farms suspected of being infected with *Mycoplasma bovis* will be under movement control.

If you suspect that you may have received animals from a risky source, please advise MPI as soon as possible, and we will investigate for you.

If you have been subject to testing through the *Mycoplasma bovis* response and there has been no infection found in your stock you will receive an End of Testing Letter from MPI at the conclusion of the testing regime.

Protecting your Business

How should lease bulls be managed once they are returned to their home farm?

Considerations for introducing bulls from other farms, leased or purchased, are no different than for any other cattle. Farmers should follow the advice provided in document titled "Managing service bulls" produced by DairyNZ working alongside MPI and industry. It is available for download [here](#).

Farms should be using routine on-farm biosecurity practices to minimise risk to their livelihood. Service providers can help minimise risk by complying with each farm's required biosecurity practices and with the farm's cleaning and disinfection requirements.

- Don't arrive unannounced. Let the farmer know you plan to visit their farm and ask their requirements.
- Work with the farmer to comply with any on-farm biosecurity requirements.
- Clean and disinfect footwear, protective clothing and equipment when leaving the farm or before visiting another farm.
- Be proactive and inform farmers of your biosecurity practices.

What sort of impacts is it likely to have on the New Zealand dairy and cattle farming industries?

Mycoplasma bovis is primarily a production and animal welfare issue. Infected cattle can become significantly ill with unresponsive mastitis, pneumonia and arthritis.

It is not a trade concern as most countries with animal production industries live with it, and successfully trade in farmed meat and dairy products.

What are the recommendations for management of winter grazing?

Guidance is in preparation by MPI and Industry and will be put on MPI's and Industry websites.

Testing

How do you test for *Mycoplasma bovis*?

Tests for *Mycoplasma bovis* are performed on blood samples, milk samples and/ or nasal swabs (for animals less than 12 months of age). Two types of tests are in use:

- The ELISA (Enzyme Linked Immune Sorbent Assay) that detects *Mycoplasma* antibodies in blood or milk.
- The PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) test that detects the genetic material, or DNA, of *Mycoplasma bovis*.

See [Fact sheet](#) on MPI's surveillance and testing for more information, recently released [video](#)

Why is it taking so long to get us test results?

Testing for *Mycoplasma bovis* is complex large scale activity. Each time a farm is sampled, a blood sample will be collected from up to 100 animals from each group of cattle of interest, in addition to a smaller number of milk samples and/or nasal swabs. Animals that are tested at slaughter have a tonsillar swab collected for PCR and a blood sample collected for ELISA.

Each time a farm is sampled this constitutes a 'round' of sampling. It can take up to 4-6 weeks from the time samples are taken to report results back to farmers, though in most instances this time frame is shorter. Every effort is being made to improve the process of getting test results back to farmers so that they get results as quickly as possible.

It is absolutely critical that we are highly confident that *Mycoplasma bovis* is not present on a farm when testing ends. Therefore farms that undergo testing will have a minimum of two rounds of samples, and a

few require three or more. As a result in some instances farms may be tested over 3–4 months before we can determine the infection status of the farm.

Unfortunately because *Mycoplasma bovis* is a complicated disease to rule out, farmers will have to wait for a period of time before we can say with a high degree of confidence that their farm is not infected.

How accurate are the available tests?

The ELISA test (looking for *Mycoplasma* antibodies in the blood) is not perfect in that it does not correctly identify animals as being infected or uninfected all of the time. It is better at correctly identifying uninfected animals compared to infected animals (about 98% of uninfected animals will test negative on ELISA), however we know that it correctly identifies about 75% of infected animals. When it is applied at the herd level (i.e. when multiple animals from a single group of animals are sampled) it is extremely good at detecting herds in which the bacteria has spread.

The PCR test (looking for DNA from the bacteria) is almost perfect in its ability to correctly identify uninfected animals – very very close to 100% of uninfected animals are negative on PCR. However, the ability of the PCR test to detect infected animals is limited by whether or not it is present from the site we collect the sample from, and our ability to get the bacteria onto the swab (either nasal swab or tonsillar swab). This limitation means that the PCR is very insensitive relative to the ELISA – a much smaller proportion of animals test positive on PCR compared to ELISA. We do not have an estimate of the proportion of infected animals that test positive on PCR, but we are confident that a tonsillar swab is our best sample type for PCR. The advantage of PCR is that when a sample tests positive we are very sure the bacteria is present.

It is important to remember that no diagnostic test for any infectious disease is perfect, and in fact the tests for *Mycoplasma bovis* being using in New Zealand are excellent. The even-better news is that we have a very high level of confidence in our sampling procedures – when the correct groups of cattle, and the correct individual cattle within those groups, are sampled over time we are very confident when we say whether that group of cattle is infected or uninfected.

What will the National Milk Surveillance Programme tell us?

The National *Mycoplasma bovis* Surveillance Programme involves testing bulk tank milk samples from all dairy farms throughout New Zealand that supply milk to a milk processing plant during the period of the survey. The programme is designed to identify previously undetected clusters of disease.

When a farm has completed the testing programme and all results are “non-detect”, the farm Dairy Processing company representative will provide a “non-detect” notification to the supplier (after MPI have released them).

Any samples that return a “detect” result are notified to the farmer by MPI.

Why do you need to test my animals even though they have already been tested as part of the National Milk Surveillance Programme?

Bulk milk testing is thought to be a very sensitive way of detecting *Mycoplasma bovis* in lactating animals if at least one animal in 1000 is shedding *M. bovis* at the time of milking. However, if no animals are shedding, or if shedding is intermittent, or if the disease is present on the farm but not within the lactating herd, then this test will not detect disease.

The bulk milk testing undertaken across New Zealand is a way of helping us to determine whether other clusters of infection exist that we have not identified through tracing of cattle movements between farms. Even if a farm has been subject to multiple rounds of bulk milk testing, it will still require on-farm testing as part of the *Mycoplasma bovis* response if tracing of cattle movements onto and off of infected properties indicate the farm is at-risk of having *Mycoplasma bovis*.

Where can I get my animals tested?

Commercial laboratories now have the ability to undertake PCR testing of samples for *Mycoplasma bovis*. This testing is not done through MPI and you should contact your veterinarian if you would like them to collect samples from your cattle for testing.

If meat processors see cattle with suspect symptoms arriving for slaughter anywhere around the country, can they be tested for *Mycoplasma bovis*?

As with all exotic diseases, if inspectors at meat processors suspect that cattle are infected they report to the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline – 0800 80 99 66 and the case will be followed up.

Support for affected farmers during tough times

Need help?

In the first instance email MBovis2017_Welfare@mpi.govt.nz with details for them to contact and put in place the support needed for the farmer.

If you or anyone you know would like support or needs someone to talk with, please contact the Rural Support Trust 0800 787 254 (0800 Rural Help) for a free and confidential chat.

You can also contact your industry group representative:

DairyNZ 0800 43 24 79 69

Beef + Lamb NZ 0800 23 33 52

Federated Farmers 0800 32 76 46

A fact sheet has been prepared, with information on looking after yourself if you're affected by the *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak [Download the looking after yourself fact sheet](#) [PDF, 489 KB]

Compensation

How do I find out about Biosecurity Act Compensation?

There is compensation available for those affected by legal directions from MPI (Restricted Place Notices or Notices of Direction). Compensation is available for damage or destruction of property or restrictions imposed under the Biosecurity Act 1993 on the movement or disposal of person's goods. Good record keeping is essential to any claim.

Multiple compensation claims can be made, and interim compensation applications are being lodged all the time. They take time to assess and verify, and some have been paid.

Information on eligibility and the process for compensation is on the MPI website: [Compensation under the Biosecurity Act](#).

Beef and Lamb NZ and DairyNZ have a team of assistants that are available to work alongside farmers to submit their compensation claim, they help to gather the necessary paperwork and filling out of the compensation forms. They can be contacted on 0800 322 821.

There is no charge to this service, here is the [DBCat Compensation Guide](#) created for farmers.

Questions on compensation progress may also be emailed to compensationcoordinator@mpi.govt.nz.

Further Information

How do I get more information?

Information is on the MPI website: <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/>.

A regular update for farmers and stakeholders is emailed by the Response team. It has details about the incursion and Response, and a covering summary about what's new since the previous Update. Subscribe [here](#) or email mbovis2017_liaison@mpi.govt.nz and ask to be added to the distribution list.

Who do I contact if I have any questions?

Please contact your local vet, or MPI through the Info line: [0800 00 83 33](tel:0800008333) or the Response Liaison email address – Mbovis2017_Liaison@mpi.govt.nz

MPI is appointing dedicated case managers for all farms under testing so that these farmers will have their own contact person to talk to and discuss results with.

Farmers seeking information about their property are encouraged to speak to their Case Manager (if they are under legal controls) or to contact MPI on 0800 00 83 33.

More Information

Where do I find more information?

- MPI website - *Mycoplasma bovis*

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

[Guidelines for farmers](#)

[Managing service bulls](#)

[Testing herd and service bulls](#)

[Advice on using imported or local semen](#)

[Mycoplasma bovis what to look for](#)

[Potential impact on the beef sector](#)

- DairyNZ - *Mycoplasma bovis*

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

[Pre-purchase checklist](#)

[Mycoplasma bovis what to look for.](#)

[Biosecurity WOF](#)

- Beef + Lamb NZ

<http://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/factsheets/drystock-biosecurity-guidelines>

<http://beeflambnz.com/news-views/m-bovis-update-keep-calm-and-carry>

- Dairy Australia - Mycoplasma in Dairy Herds

http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Industry-information/About-Dairy-Australia/~/_media/Documents/Animal%20management/Mastitis/Countdown%20news/2016%20-%20Mycoplasma%20in%20dairy%20herds%20fact%20sheet.pdf

- Expert Q&A on the Science Media Centre

<https://www.sciencemediacentre.co.nz/2017/07/27/cattle-disease-found-nz-expert-qa/>

- The Society of Sheep and Beef Cattle Veterinarians

They have published three documents on the New Zealand Veterinary Association website to support veterinarians and their clients with testing for *Mycoplasma bovis*. Information documents now available include:

[Standard Operating Procedure for Nasopharyngeal Swab Technique for Cattle](#)

[Standard Operating Procedure for Preputial Swab Technique for Bulls](#)

[Testing of Service Bulls for Mycoplasma bovis in New Zealand](#)