

To New Zealand beef and dairy farmers

Moves to eradicate *Mycoplasma bovis*

You may have heard that the Government and farming leaders have agreed to attempt to eradicate the cattle disease *Mycoplasma bovis* from New Zealand.

This is a decision that will undoubtedly be welcomed by many but may be distressing for those who are directly affected by the disease. We are in contact with these farmers and working with them through this tough time.

The decision follows months of fact gathering about *Mycoplasma bovis*, how it could affect New Zealand's beef and dairy herds and the benefits and costs of attempting to eradicate it. Ultimately it was decided by the Government, with the full support of the farming sector leaders, that action is needed now to give all New Zealand farmers, their families and communities, certainty for the future.

Your welfare and that of your animals is at the heart of the decision to proceed. We know that not all infected animals become visibly sick, and it is possible to manage the disease through changing farming practices. However, the disease could have impacts on many farms, which could accumulate over time to become nationally significant.

We are taking a phased approach to eradication. This will be more practical, achievable and easier on individuals than trying to eradicate in a short period of time. Under phased eradication, current Infected Properties will have all their cattle culled. The property will be disinfected and able to be restocked after a 60 day stand down period.

We will work closely with the farmers on the timing for depopulation, based on the maintenance of movement controls. For example, if a farmer wishes to milk for the full season and then have their farm depopulated and cleaned for the following season that may be possible. Current Restricted Places will also be depopulated on the basis of disease risk and farmers will have the same choice as those on infected properties.

Affected farmers are being supported. There will be an immediate and significant increase in the numbers of both MPI and industry people deployed in the field to work one-on-one with those affected. They will have their own assigned case manager, and the Rural Support Trust will continue to work closely with them. Please look after others in your community. If you or someone you know needs help, please reach out – contact a GP, friends or your other community support services.

Those that are directed to have animals culled or their farm operations restricted under movement controls will be eligible to apply for compensation. In particular, farmers whose animals are being culled will receive a substantial part of their claim within 4-10 days, with a fully verified claim taking 2-3 weeks.

The loss of production if we walked away from *Mycoplasma bovis* has been estimated at over a billion dollars in the next ten years. The human and animal welfare costs would be high for those of you who ended up managing untreatable illness in your herds.

We know that this is a huge challenge and concede that it's possible the time could come when we may have learn to live with it and manage it within our herds. We are not there now. We will do a further round of national bulk milk surveillance testing in spring and will assess the direction of the operation on receipt of those results and other information.

While the operation continues, there are things you can do to help:

- If you suspect you have animals that have the disease, contact your vet or MPI on **0800 80 99 66**.
It's important we find every last case and deal with it.
- Use NAIT. Work is already underway to improve it and make it easier to use.
- Practice good on-farm biosecurity.

Full information is at:

www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis

www.dairynz.org.nz/mbovis

www.beeflambnz.com

Regards

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