



UPDATES AND KEY FACTS

MYCOPLASMA BOVIS



What is *Mycoplasma bovis*?

- *Mycoplasma bovis* is a bacterial disease. It is commonly found in cattle all over the world. New Zealand was one of the last countries free of the disease until July 2017, when it was detected here.
- It can lead to serious health conditions in cattle and therefore constitutes an animal welfare and productivity issue.
- It spreads from animal-to-animal through close contact. Between farms it spreads by the movement of infected animals, which may not show symptoms. It is potentially spread through contaminated equipment and by feeding untreated, infected milk to calves. It is not windborne.
- While some of the health conditions can be treated, affected cattle will always be carriers of *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- The disease may be dormant in an animal, causing no health conditions at all. But in times of stress (for example: calving, drying off, transporting or while exposed to extreme weather) bacteria may be shed in milk and nasal secretions. As a result, other animals may be infected and become ill or be carriers themselves.
- It does not infect humans, and is not a food safety concern.

Phased eradication?

- Under phased eradication, we're working with individual farmers and their industry organisations to completely get rid of *Mycoplasma bovis* from New Zealand's dairy and beef herds over time.
- All herds with infected animals will be culled – on a timetable that works for the farmer, so long as we're confident we have the disease locked down on that farm.
- This means that, for example, if a farmer wants to milk through to a particular date, finish off beef animals or achieve some other farming or personal objective, then we will work with that.
- We expect most of the job will be done in the next year or two.
- We'll need to keep tracing animals, and testing animals and milk, until our checks find no more cases of the disease.
- It could take 8–10 years before we can be confident we've finally got rid of the disease.

Progress to date

- Overall there are some 280 properties where we have or intend to restrict the movement of animals – this includes the Infected Properties and properties where we have a strong suspicion of *Mycoplasma bovis*. This is down from around 350 in May.
- We've reduced the number through our testing work – where suspect farms have tested clear, restrictions are lifted and they go back to normal farming.
- Since July last year, we have found 56 properties where *Mycoplasma bovis* has been confirmed (these are called Infected Properties).
- This is out of more than 20 000 dairy and beef farms across the country.
- Nearly half of those Infected Properties have had their cattle culled and been moved into a process of cleaning, disinfection and laying fallow for 60 days. The current number of Infected Properties has reduced to around 40.
- We have finished this process on many of those, and lifted legal restrictions, meaning that once they get sign-off those farmers can restock.



No food safety risk

- *Mycoplasma bovis* is not a food safety risk. It is a disease that affects animal welfare and production. It affects only cattle, including dairy cows and beef cattle. It is common in many food-producing nations where infected animals that aren't showing symptoms are processed for human consumption.
- Cattle slaughtered in New Zealand as part of measures to control *Mycoplasma bovis* are processed in line with standard procedures. Before leaving the farm, they are assessed by vets to confirm they are fit for transport. At the processing plants, MPI veterinarians assess the health of each animal before slaughter.
- Any animals that are sick, severely injured, or have any medication in their system are not processed for human consumption. This is a requirement of New Zealand law. All animals are also examined after slaughter to ensure the meat is safe and suitable for consumption.

Testing

- Seemingly healthy animals can still carry the infection and infect others. Clinical signs only appear when an animal is under stress of some sort.
- So – if we confirm the disease in one animal, for disease control purposes we have to assume in-contact animals are infected and treat them as diseased also.
- Testing can take some weeks and there may need to be several rounds of tests to confirm the disease or freedom from it. The majority of farms tested come back negative.

Compensation

- Compensation is available for anyone who has verifiable losses as a result of directions they are given by MPI under the Biosecurity Act to manage *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- Farmers 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 an initial payment for the value of culled stock within 2 weeks of a completed claim being lodged.
- By late July, MPI had fully or partly paid 81 claims for compensation, valued at \$14.1 million. This includes multiple claims from infected farms. The total value of claims received (including those yet to be assessed) is \$36.4 million.

What is the cost of phased eradication?

- The full cost of eradication over 10 years is projected at \$886 million.
- Of this, \$16 million will be loss of production and borne by farmers, and \$870 million is the cost of the response (including compensation to farmers).
- Government will meet 68 percent of this cost and DairyNZ and Beef+Lamb New Zealand will contribute 32 percent.