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Deputy Minister for Farming and Food



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1NA

cc: Presiding Officer

25 November 2014

*Dear Assembly Member,*

### **Compensation for bovine TB**

On 21 October I made a statement to the Assembly to inform Members of my decision to maintain the current system of on farm valuation for TB compensation along with several enhancements. I am writing to you to further clarify a few of the issues raised during the plenary session.

In its response to the consultation of a table valuation system for TB compensation, NFU Cymru suggested setting-up a panel of acknowledged experts in livestock valuation to advise on TB compensation and ensure consistency and fairness. Although I appreciate all the suggestions in NFU Cymru's response, I believe that we already have this in place in the form our Monitor Valuers, which consist of a group of three expert livestock valuers. Their role is to ensure consistency and that valuations are fair to the farmer and taxpayer. They do this by regularly examining valuations and seeking justification as necessary. As well as this the Monitor Valuers can 'park' valuers, temporarily preventing them from undertaking any further valuations, if they have not received satisfactory justification of a valuation. They can also monitor warranted valuers by accompanying them on valuation visits and monitor valuations by attending abattoirs to assess animals prior to slaughter. I believe that the changes I have announced will also allow them to scrutinise valuations more rigorously than they are able to do under the current arrangements.

I want to reassure Members that, under the procurement process, the framework contract will be tendered in open competition and will therefore be open to all livestock auctioneers. The exact requirements of the tender are yet to be agreed but they will be established in consultation with the valuer associations, to ensure we have suitably qualified valuers.

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During the plenary session I was asked if I would be willing to consider introducing an appeal in exceptional circumstances where animals are valued above £15,000. It is not my intention to introduce an appeal system because any delay in the arrangement of the valuation, whilst a farmer appeals the valuation of the animal, would result in an infected animal staying on the farm for longer. This goes against the principles of infectious disease control, which include finding infection quickly, stopping it spreading and then eliminating it. This could also lead to more animals becoming infected, thus prolonging the breakdown.

With regard to the issue of insurance, my officials have found that insurance schemes are available to cover for the relevant losses as a result of animals slaughtered due to bovine TB. I have been informed that the cost of the insurance will vary in line with the likely risk, as is the case for other insurance cover, and therefore the practicality and cost will depend on the individual circumstances of each farmer. Ultimately, insuring an animal will be a commercial decision for each farmer.

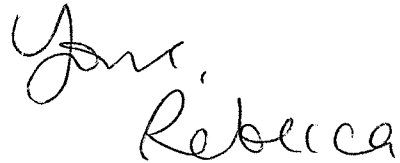
There was a suggestion during the consultation that private vets could carry out a valuation at the time reactors are identified. On occasions, an Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) officer can agree a valuation with the farmer. This is to help facilitate the rapid removal of one or two animals. However, after considering how this would help achieve our aims of compensating farmers fairly for the loss of their cattle and avoiding TB compensation being paid at rates above 100% of the animal's value, I am not convinced that private vets are suitably qualified to routinely value cattle. Instead, I believe that private veterinary practitioners play a pivotal role in ensuring the health and welfare of animals. Through our *Cymorth TB* pilot, which ran from October 2013 to May 2014, we evaluated possible roles for private vets in the management of TB breakdowns and to consider ways in which these vets could give enhanced support to herd keepers. Following the completion of the pilot we received an evaluation report from Cardiff University. It is a very positive assessment of the pilot stating that *Cymorth TB* demonstrates the value of involving private vets in the management of bovine TB to farmers, APHA and the private vets themselves. I will shortly publish a written statement to the Assembly about the report and the further roll-out of *Cymorth TB*.

I was asked during the plenary session what action I am taking to address timeliness of valuers attending on-farm valuations. In order to remove diseased animals as quickly as possible APHA aims to arrange for on-farm valuation and removal of reactor cattle within 10 days of the disclosure of the breakdown. The average reactor removal time this year is 8.4 working days with 94.9% of reactors moved within 10 working days. I therefore do not believe that this is currently an issue but I have asked my officials to continue to monitor reactor removal times to ensure that they are as low as is practicably possible.

Some of the respondents to the consultation suggested that the Welsh Government should notify farms adjacent to a TB breakdown so that neighbouring farms can take appropriate biosecurity measures to minimise the risk. I am pleased to inform Members that we are working with Defra and APHA on developing a web-based system which will display the location of current cattle herd breakdowns in Wales and England. The location of the herd will be displayed on a map if it is currently under TB restrictions. We are planning on consulting on this soon and I will make a further announcement shortly.

Finally, I want to reassure Members that we will continue to monitor the impact of the measures introduced within the Intensive Action Area (IAA). I hope that, through the range

of measures we have introduced to reduce the level of infection within all species in the area, we will eventually see reduction in the number of infected herds. However, several years need to pass before any meaningful differences between the herds in the IAA and the comparison area can be confirmed. As well as this, we will not be able to attribute any differences observed in TB incidence levels in the IAA to any of the measures in isolation. Reports of the annual assessments cattle herd breakdowns within the IAA are available on the Welsh Government website: [www.wales.gov.uk/bovinetb](http://www.wales.gov.uk/bovinetb)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ynys, Rebecca'.

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