

## You Have TB in your Herd - WHAT'S NEXT?

Having gone through the devastation of TB in my own herd of alpacas in Sept 08 through to May 2010, and having spoken to over 30 other owners who are in the TB Support group, we have all received that initial phone call telling us we have TB. The news is devastating.

All of a sudden your life and the way you do things changes dramatically. Only those that succumb to TB can truly understand that - but as soon as you suffer your first loss to TB, your entire herd is at risk and there are immediate measures you can take to reduce the risk of spread amongst your own herd, neighbouring livestock - and yourself.

One thing you must accept and that is TB isn't your fault - you have done nothing wrong, so don't blame yourself. Stop the "if only I had done this" and "if only I had done that" - we all do it but it won't help. You need to face the problem and look ahead not back. You need to be emotionally strong in order to deal with what lies ahead and at times that will be very difficult but talking about it does help and that is why the TB Support group is vital - so you can communicate with others in the same position.

Having lost one animal, there is a strong chance another of the group, or your entire herd is infected. There is lots of information on this web site regarding protecting your herd and yourself but if you have come down with TB from infected wildlife on your farm (as opposed to by purchase or mating) then you need to take serious measures to keep wildlife out e.g. badger/deer fencing. If you don't then it is inevitable re-infection will occur. Having said that herds who succumb to TB because of purchase or mating must also adopt serious measures to reduce the risk of infecting their local wildlife and neighbouring livestock.

Consider having a Farm Wildlife Survey done and follow the advice in the DEFRA 'Reducing the risk' document (which can be found on the Reducing the Risk section of this web site) although that advice although is based on cattle it is excellent. Cattle do not spit, nor do they tend to carry open lesions whilst outwardly showing no symptoms - camelids, however, are a totally different story and therefore we need to be more aware of the risk to the remainder of our herd and the increased zoonotic risk.

**IF YOUR PM STRONGLY INDICATES BOVINE TB YOU WILL BE PUT UNDER RESTRICTION IMMEDIATELY. DO NOT WAIT FOR THE CULTURE TO CONFIRM TB WHICH CAN TAKE UP TO 12 WEEKS - ACT IMMEDIATELY.**

1. You **MUST** notify anyone you have either sold to or had mating services with and notify owners of agisted animals that have been on your farm in the past 12/24 months even if it was only short term. By informing them promptly, they too can then take necessary measures on their own farms and possibly reduce spread. Advise them that AH may be in contact with them.
2. You must notify any owners of agisted animals that are currently on your farm. These animals must not be moved back to the original holding. Notify the owners that their animals will now be subject to testing and cannot be returned to them until restrictions have been lifted.
3. Consider the group from which you suffered your first loss as highest risk and that they are potentially infected. If this group have had nose to nose contact with any of your other groups then consider your entire herd as high risk.
4. Do not move any of this group out, nor move any of your other groups in with this group. Discontinue mating with your own stud males until you are out of restriction.
5. Ensure no nose-to-nose contact/spitting distance between your other groups/neighbouring livestock. If you cannot move this group to an isolation field you must install perimeter fencing/secondary fencing including gateways with at least a 10 foot gap. If you have a footpath running through your property, install secondary fencing so that no human contact is possible.
6. Set up an isolation paddock with a shelter and no nose to nose contact with your herd or neighbouring livestock.
7. Foot dips must be used when entering and leaving your farm and paddocks. DEFRA recommends FAM 30 along with others (which kills TB) available from most farming suppliers - not only as a foot dip but for disinfecting stables, equipment, etc. A list of other disinfectants can be found on this website.

8 . Use separate poo cleaning equipment for this field – never use it on other fields unless it has been disinfected. If you use a poo Hoover, scrub the wheels down before entering other fields. The same applies to any tractors, etc, that have been in this field. If you have suffered losses from any of your other groups apply the same measures as above. Clean your paddocks as often as possible (ideally daily) and do not store faeces in fields where your herd are. Remember TB is transmissible in faeces.

9. Clean water troughs daily. Make sure troughs are a minimum of 3 feet off the ground. If cria are present then as high as possible while still in reach of cria.

10. Use as many hay racks as possible to eliminate any fighting/spitting over hay.

11. No hand feeding. You will pass potentially infected saliva from one to the other, let alone yourself.

12. Wear disposable gloves – protective clothing – use a face mask - when handling this group, or handling their faeces and disinfect hands thoroughly especially if handling the face/mouth area. Remember this is a zoonosis – it can pass to humans and has been transferred to humans - I myself came down to BTb in 2012 and it was spoligotyped back to my breakdown in 2008. Therefore keep children away and minimise contact. Cease holding any hands-on courses if you are under restriction. Follow HSA (Health and Safety Authority) and HPA (Health Protection Agency) guidelines. Legal ramifications may apply if you continue.

13. Try to feed in individual buckets and do not let them go from bucket to bucket. If you cannot do this due to the size of the group, allow plenty of feeding troughs and clean them out after feeding and tip upside down.

14. Monitor your herd daily and often closely. If any of this group or your other groups show any signs/symptoms – REMOVE THEM from this group immediately, along with a mate for company, and seek veterinary advice. Do not return this animal to the group until you are certain this animal does not have TB or has recovered from a vet diagnosed illness. Often they show very subtle signs – get to know your herd. Monitor weight – breathing – feeding habits – lethargy – coughing – stiffness in getting up and cushing down – overall demeanor or any change in their normal behaviour.

15. AH will visit you and ask for all your movement records so have them ready for your visit and be honest. Honesty isn't just the best policy - it is the only policy when it comes to TB. They will discuss the procedures with you. Ask them for a copy of the current policy and procedures. You will be asked to sign a letter of consent to test make sure you keep a copy for your records.

16. Also the HPA (Health Protection Agency) will contact you to discuss the risks to you and your family/staff and they may arrange X-rays, BCG skin tests on those in contact with your herd if they feel it necessary.

17. Your first skin test will be carried out either straight away or 90 days after your first loss. If TB was evident on post mortem (PM) it is strongly advisable that you request your first skin test or vet check test is carried out as soon as possible rather than wait 90 days. The Chembio Rapid Stat Pak Test can be used at anytime, but it is DEFRA's preference to conduct the test (whenever possible) in the 10 – 30 days following a tuberculin skin test in order to boost (or 'prime') the antibody response. Please note you will not be able to do the blood test until culture comes back and confirms TB. The only downside of having your skin test done straight away is that you will have to have 3 rounds of skin test instead of 1. The first one will not count if it is carried out within 90 days of your first loss, but it is better to remove reactors sooner rather than later.

18. You will need a small pen, approximately 4 feet wide by 5 feet deep, or a crush. If you make a crush, ensure there is space for the AH vet to be able to get to the animal's armpit. If you can handle your animals, the procedure is not too stressful on your herd and you can simply halter the animal and hold as you do when you carry out injections. If you can't do this, then you will need a crush for not only your own safety but that of your animals. You can ask your vet to sedate any animals you feel will be too difficult but you will have to pay for that. There are many homeopathy treatments that are very useful, e.g., AAA/Valerian for stress – useful for not only your herd but for you.

19. Make sure you have a good set up for testing( see preparing for skin test) this is vital and can be set up for very little cost but it will make the process so much easier for yourself and your herd and will

bring one group in at a time then return to their paddock - then bring in your next group and so on testing your highest risk group the last. If you cannot do this then have your skin test set up in every paddock. This is the best option and reduces the risk of cross contamination.

20. Do not use any treatment on your herd between the skin test and the reading date without permission from your vet/AHO certain medications/vaccines can affect the result. After your skin test monitor your herd very closely (literally - not from a distance) for possible side effects. See side effects info on this site.

21. If you have any reactors it may take up to 10 days before AH can arrange for removal. If you have more than one reactor remove from the group and move to your isolation paddock. Those that fall into the "watch" category must also be isolated. "Watch" is simply those that have had a reaction but not met the current 2 mm measurement for positive results or have had a severe side effect following the skin test or other reasons which your AHO will advise you on.

22. You will be offered either euthanasia by injection, free bullet or captive bolt. This will be carried out on farm. This will be paid for by DEFRA. (See euthanasia section on this site).

23. The animal/s will be removed afterwards and taken to the VLA for PM, also paid for by DEFRA. You should receive a verbal result of your PM within 48 hours and a written one within 7 days.

24. If you do not cull your positives you will not be allowed to undergo any further testing - or receive compensation - and will therefore be under restriction until that animal either dies or you cull.

25. Once you have culled your reactor/s or if you suffer any further losses in your herd, the 90-day process begins all over again - so you have a test 90 days after your loss and then another test 90 days after that providing no further losses have occurred.

26. You will be offered the Chembio Rapid Stat Pak blood Test - consider these carefully before agreeing as you will be required to cull ALL positives. Blood tests do pick up infected animals which the skin test is missing and the data gathered to date is proving that the Chembio Rapid Blood test is removing infected alpacas from herds. You may experience NVLS (No Visible Lesions) but this doesn't necessarily mean your animal didn't have TB (see NVL document)

27. If your entire herd tests negative, do not think your herd is in the clear. Negative skin tests do not mean your animals do not have TB. Continue to monitor as above. A negative skin test does not mean your animal is TB free.

28. Tell your shearer or anyone who needs to handle your herd that you are under restriction. You are putting their health at risk if you fail to do so and ramifications of such actions, should you not be honest, may be severe.

29. If/when you become clear and restrictions are removed it is highly recommended you do not sell/show/move your herd anywhere for a minimum of 12 months, due to the inaccuracy of the skin test and the risk of infecting other herds/livestock, especially if you have refused blood tests. Continue to use all the previous biosecurity measures throughout the quarantine period.

Finally - DO NOT go through this on your own - contact myself Dianne Summers who not only has first-hand experience of TB in her own herd but also heads the Camelid TB Support Group where fellow TB sufferers are in touch with each other and can share advice, symptoms and data and someone is always at the end of the phone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The support group also offers emotional support which you may need.

Contact Dianne on 01209 822422 07949511316 or [summersdianne@yahoo.com](mailto:summersdianne@yahoo.com)

All data you provide will be treated as strictly private and confidential. Names or even your county will never be released even to other members of the TB Support group without your permission. Only the data you provide which will not include any names or counties will be shared. The Support Group works closely with DEFRA and AH and, if problems arise, we can help.

DS. Updated 6 June 2013