

Unofficial Notes following Winton Mycoplasma Bovis community meeting,
Tuesday 19th December 6.20pm

Following last night's meeting in Winton, the questions posed and answers given are reproduced below. This is not an official record of the meeting, rather my recollection (Olivia Ross) prepared to assist those farmers unable to participate.

The questions came from audience members whereas presentations and answers were provided by MPI with support from DairyNZ, Federated Farmers, Vets South, rural Support Trust and B+LNZ.

Eradication is still the option being pursued. Movements are still being traced from restricted properties. International experts from the UK Australia United States of America Canada and New Zealand have all been involved in reviewing what is being considered the most comprehensive surveillance program in New Zealand to date.

The community meeting was to inform farmers of the facts and evidence about the disease and to answer questions from the community. Stakeholder updates are available and this link needs to be continued to be pushed out and made available. Documentation and recording of movements in NAIT was highlighted as something that needs to be improved.

It is believed from the science and evidence to date that this disease is a recent incursion into New Zealand.

Questions presented by MPI:

How and when did it get to Winton?

The response to this question was they didn't know the answer as yet but are continuing to look at movements to and from the infected properties dating back to early 2017.

Why did it take so long to find these traces?

Establishment of movement history is a slow process and then the testing needs to be done multiple times and needs to be done in multiple ways including milk, blood and tissue samples.

How did it get to New Zealand in the first place?

It is believed by one of seven different pathways: semen, feed, live animals, surfaces, veterinary equipment, medicines and embryos

Why do we not name positive properties?

Prevented from doing so by the Privacy Act and also impacts on infected farmers' welfare [there is also the need to preserve incentives for early reporting of suspicious signs of disease]

Why not just kill the animals on those farms?

For the next month we have decided not to cull any more stock until we understand the extent of the infected network of farms

Shutting off cook strait?

We don't have enough evidence by law to shut this down

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Why aren't we using other labs to speed up this process?

To limit the risk of spread through labs and the confinement that is required

Key notes from speakers:

(please note a lot of what was spoken about can be found at the following link in a document already produced by MPI <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/26542-mycoplasma-bovis-2017-response-faqs>)

- Once a farm is confirmed as positive They are assigned a Restricted Place manager who help to control and contain and de-stock at the property -They liaise with MPI so that the farmer only has to engage with one person
- Was highlighted that reducing transport and other service providers entering the property and disinfecting veterinary / milking equipment were good standard biosecurity measures farmers should consider

Compensation – if you have been affected and believe you need to talk to someone regards compensation you can find all details here: <https://www.mpi.govt.nz/law-and-policy/legal-overviews/biosecurity/biosecurity-act-compensation/>

Rural support - <http://www.rural-support.org.nz/>

Questions asked from public and the answers:

Question. Could it have started in Southland and gone north?

Answer. This is something that hasn't been able to be determined yet

Question. What was the red flag in the first place?

Answer. A call to the 0800 hundred number from a vet

Question. Are there more suspect farms being looked into in Southland?

Answer. Not that we are aware of yet but there could be other properties that are placed under Notices of Direction following our tracing, but in many cases these are never found to have infection.

Question. Is there an intention to bulk milk test all of Southland?

Answer. This is being explored.

Question. Of the 62 neighbouring properties of the van Lewin farm how many of them have been tested?

Answer. 57 of those properties carrying cattle have been tested with no results of interest coming back to date

Question. In 2012 the board of enquiry was removed why are tests not being sent to the Australian lab?

Answer. The reason for not sending is the level of infection seen in these countries in the presentation of this bug is different in New Zealand compared to Australia. MPI agrees that 60% test sensitivity is hopeless but we are constrained by the tests available

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Question. How can I ensure people that my stock are Mycoplasma bovis free?

Answer. Commercial testing through vets is now available however having one test comeback not positive won't conclude that you are not affected. it is a numbers game the more stock & the more rounds of testing give more Assurance that your stock are free of disease

If you are sourcing sire bulls ask about the herd health status and other bulls brought on and off the properties. Putting in place farm biosecurity measures is good management practice

Question. MPI has been slow to respond. What is the story and why have people not got back to me?

Answer. We need to get back to people and I take responsibility to ensure this happens.

Question. Have the bull calves sold off the infected property been found and identified?

Answer. Yes 15 properties potentially will go under Notices of Direction and all are being worked on

Question. How are the farmers going to be assisted, especially since there may soon be 15 additional farms of concern?

Answer. Effective farm manages will be put in place to be the interface between MPI and the farmer and rural support trust will also be on hand from a welfare respective.

Question. You have highlighted that it's a difficult bacterium to contain unless animals are culled but have also said that you stopped culling animals so how are you going to stop it?

Answer. The reason for stopping culling is we need to understand impact and understand the traces. We believe that the risks have been minimised because the farms which have been identified as positive are now in lockdown and they don't present a risk of transfer

Question. On a scale from 1 to 10 compared to TB, Johne's or BVD where does this disease sit?

Answer. I can't answer that, we can't quantify at this stage.

Question. Assurance that when we look back, that a robust review on the biosecurity systems will be completed and nothing is covered up?

Answer. Simply you have my word (Geoff MPI). We have a challenge, but we will do our best to move through it.

Question. Concern that half loads of cattle been put together to make full loads, and therefore travelled with infected stock. Is there people that don't know their stock have been in this position?

Answer. Again comes back to tracing issues and movement records but our guys will know if partial loads have been involved with infected stock and will be working on identifying these.

Question. Best disinfectant?

Answer. Almost any disinfectant at the right concentration will work, however you need to clean things first - can't just use disinfectant on dirty equipment, boots etc.

Question. What is the risk of other live animals other than cattle carrying the disease?

Answer. Low risk of movement on other stock, this is a cattle disease and other animals aren't involved.

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Question. If we were to infect 100 animals today, what signs would they show and how long until they would be seen?

Answer. Might not see anything for a long time. It's a disease that is brought on by stressful times and pressure points.

Question. Are there any vaccines nationwide being used?

Answer. No, a lot of work is being done but nothing affective as yet

Question. Is there likely to be a satellite disease control centre established in Southland?

Answer. Yes, there will be a presence here

Question. Is all stock going to be tissue sampled when culled now and going forward?

Answer. We are looking seriously at this option but we are unsure when this would go ahead. There will always be ongoing surveillance.

Question. Can the process of informing neighbors change, so that they are informed immediately?

Answer. Again we are bound by the privacy act but we ask the farmers themselves to inform neighbors.

Question. What is the process after culling of Cows?

Answer. All farms are entirely cleaned and go through 2 rounds of disinfection 21 days apart. They then need to be signed off byASUREQuality. Once signed off there is a 60-day stand-down period of no stock and then we will look to re-populate.

Question. Some literature says this needs to be an eight-month stand-down?

Answer. The bulk of the literature says 60 days.

Question. Eradication it appears that a soft approach is being applied especially if we refer to the likes of Auckland when the whole town was sprayed for 15 fruit flies. Is it the cost or why does this seem to be the case?

Answer. It's not about the money no one says eradication is off the table we are just not culling for the next month to understand the extent of disease spread

Question. How long has testing been undertaken at the Winton property?

Answer. It was picked up in bulk milk as part of the nationwide testing. I think it was 10 days before MPI announced that this was identified. We have not been testing there for five months as the rumours say.

Question. How did Other countries react to receiving this disease?

Answer. To a lot of the countries it was just another disease. It doesn't affect everyone uniformly, for example in Australia 2 to 3% of herds are affected. We would learn to live with it but we have the opportunity at present to get rid of it.

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Question. Do we need to deal with effluent differently? How was the effluent on infected farm is being dealt with?

Answer. At present the effluent is being agitated and a lot of the chemical wash down is being added to it. It is then been put into paddocks which were going to crop

Question. How many tests are required to be confident infection is not present in a herd?

Answer. Need to be a minimum of 21 days between testing which is been proven to be most effective. Testing regimes can only be developed and the number of rounds required in relation to the risk assessment level that farm sits. Customised to meet risk requirements of the property.

Question. Is an island nation we are a quarantine island. As a levy payer and tax payer what assurance can you give us to give us confidence that we are on the right track to being future clear.

Answer. We would have to stop everything coming into the country to be completely risk-free. As a trading nation that is untenable. The pathway system report will be available in the New Year and made public outlining some of these concerns.

Question. When do we stop concentrating on eradication and start looking at management and how do we protect ourselves is farmers?

Answer. We are looking at those options now and getting international advice and reviews. We don't want to tell you how to farm but there are steps that you can put in place to become biosecurity friendly

Question. How clean do I have to get my contractors gear before it can be disinfected?

Answer. Tractors ploughing aren't as risky as other machinery. Transport trucks, technicians can easily clean gear and have more interaction with the stock themselves

Get your records up to date by visiting:

<http://www.nait.co.nz/>

Visit the MPI website for all links to handouts and resources:

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

You can also sign up to MPI's regular farmer update emails by contacting

MBovis2017_Liaison@mpi.govt.nz You will receive an email update for farmers about the Mycoplasma Bovis response as new information comes to hand.

For all other questions please contact your local vet, or MPI through the Info line: 0800 00 83 33 or the Response Liaison email address – MBovis2017_Liaison@mpi.govt.nz

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