

Field trials for leading cattle vaccine and skin test for bTB

In a world first, field trials for a cattle vaccine and a new skin test for bovine tuberculosis (bTB) have begun in England, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has announced today.

If the field trials are successful, farmers and vets will move a step closer to being able to vaccinate their animals against the disease, helping to save thousands of cattle every year that would have otherwise been culled to prevent the spread of bTB to other herds. The skin test which will accompany the vaccine also represents a major breakthrough by enabling vets to identify cattle that have been vaccinated and those that are infected with the disease – to date this has not been possible.

bTB is the most difficult and intractable animal health challenge that we face today and costs taxpayers around £100 million every year. Over 36,000 cattle in England and Wales have had to be slaughtered in the last year to tackle the disease and the UK is leading the way in the development of a cattle vaccine with the aim of rolling it out by 2025.

In December, the APHA – which has over 500 staff involved in tackling the disease – awarded [a contract to Eville & Jones](#) to run clinical field trials in cattle as a result of a culmination of over 20 years of ground-breaking research at the agency.

A bTB-free farm in Hertfordshire has commenced the first phase of these trials to determine the safety and accuracy of the DIVA skin test, with further herds across England and Wales to join them over the coming months.

In the event that these first trials are successful, the study will then be expanded to more farms in England and Wales as part of its second phase, to test both the Cattle BCG vaccine and DIVA skin test together.

This will allow us to generate sufficient evidence to support a Market Authorisation (MA) application to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to use both products in the UK.

In a joint statement the Chief Veterinary Officers from England, Scotland and Wales said:

Bovine Tuberculosis represents one of the most difficult animal disease challenges we face today. However, the start of these ground-breaking field trials will be welcome news for many farmers who have been greatly impacted by this disease and represents an important step forward in our efforts to deploy a working cattle vaccine by 2025.

If successful, the world-leading project could lead to the first

ever deployment of a cattle bTB vaccine and DIVA skin test and will be instrumental in turning the tide against this terrible disease which impacts many countries around the world.

More information about the bTB cattle vaccination programme can be found on the [APHA Science Blog](#) and on the [TB Hub](#).