

New incidence of TB down 35% in IAA

The IAA was established in North Pembrokeshire in 2010 as an area where increased measures would be applied to tackle all sources of bovine TB. These included stricter cattle controls, improved biosecurity, badger vaccination and testing of all goats and camelids. This is an approach which has never been tried before in the UK.

Today's report suggests the methods being applied in the area are working, with the disease situation in the IAA improving faster than in a nearby comparison area, where incidence fell by 23% over the same period.

The proportion of herds under restriction for bovine TB in the IAA has also fallen to 14.3%, compared with 22.3% in 2010.

Welcoming the report, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

"We've made significant progress since we began our TB eradication programme in 2008 and over 95% of herds in Wales are now TB free. While some will attribute this to herd numbers falling in recent years, it is important to note the proportion of these herds with TB has also reduced by 26% since 2008.

"Today's report is encouraging and shows, over time, all the measures used in the IAA have had a positive impact on the disease. This is further evidence our approach to reducing the incidence of TB is working, with numbers of new incidents now at their lowest in 12 years."

The report also reinforces the fact a recent increase in the number of cattle slaughtered across Wales because of bovine TB does not reflect a worsening situation. Instead, the rise is largely due to an increase in the use of the more sensitive gamma interferon blood test and more severe interpretation of the skin test. The increase is largely confined to the areas which carry out the most gamma testing.

The Cabinet Secretary added:

"Late last year I launched a consultation on the next steps in our TB eradication programme. Many of the responses to this consultation agreed we need to take a more regional response, which will build on the progress we have already made and accelerate our advance towards a TB free Wales. I shall be making a statement on the future of our TB eradication programme next month."