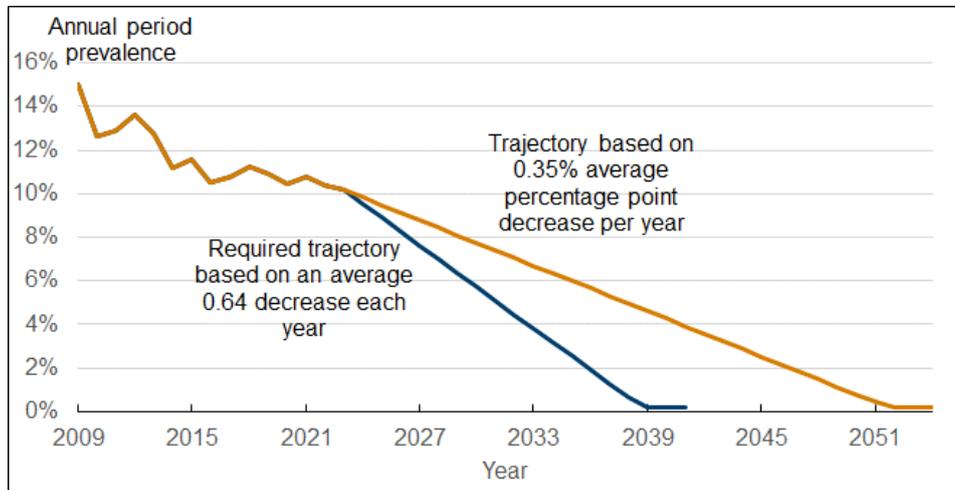


Bovine TB Programme Board Position Paper 2026

Summary

Evidence from Welsh Government's (WG) own figures¹ clearly shows that their target to eradicate Bovine TB (bTB) in Wales by 2041 will not be met.



Linear projection of annual period prevalence showing current trajectory and trajectory needed to achieve TB eradication by 2041

This target was set in the 2017 Welsh Government Five Year Delivery Plan for TB Eradication². A restructure of governance was part of the refreshed approach of the 2023-2028 period³. As a result, the Bovine TB Eradication Programme Board⁴ (Board) and separate Technical Advisory Group⁵ (TAG) were established who share knowledge, expertise and evidence to advise on future bTB eradication policies for Wales. As part of the restructure of governance the Board was charged with publishing a Position Paper on the eradication of TB in Wales.

Board Position on Policy to Eradicate Bovine TB in Wales

It is clear that, to improve on the current trajectory, **a step change to the urgency and resources devoted to eradication is needed to meet the target for Wales to be Officially TB Free by 2041**. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) has specific requirements⁶ before a country can gain Officially TB Free Status, which include a national policy for the prevention of transmission of Bovine TB (*M.bovis*) from wildlife to cattle. Advice from the Board and TAG has already effected change to policy around On-Farm Slaughter and the management of Resolved Standard Inconclusive Reactor cattle (IRs) but future policy must consider all three populations affected by bTB – cattle, people and wildlife. The Board believes that:

- A Partnership approach is fundamental to meeting this goal
- To accelerate progress in eradicating this disease, a comprehensive strategy based on scientific evidence and analysis must be deployed, moving from a one size fits all policy to more local and evidence-based interventions

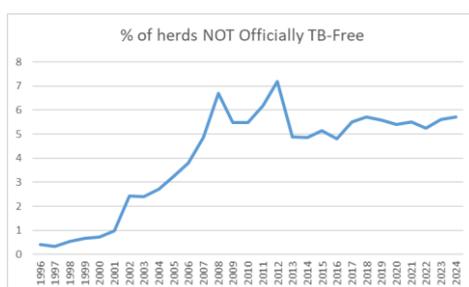
- Investigation is needed to ascertain if the current testing regime and policy on movement controls is fit for purpose⁷ and consideration should be given to other diagnostic tools and innovations which are available and would be adaptive to future developments and improvements in this area
- The provision of data to inform decisions by farmers and their vets⁸ on the management of risk within their herds will enable greater accountability and ownership of bTB
- Communications should be reviewed to ensure they are understood by the intended audience⁸
- Interventions must control disease in a sustainable way that allows farm businesses to continue to operate profitably⁹
- Due consideration should be given to the mental and physical health impacts of policy¹⁰ on all stakeholders including farmers, vets and regulatory body personnel
- There is evidence that wildlife is part of the disease epidemiology¹¹ but more surveillance and research is needed to provide comprehensive data and evidence to inform the development of appropriate policy for disease control in all species affected
- Further investigation is needed to ascertain where the science and evidence would support epidemiological led interventions to tackle the disease in the wildlife, considering exit strategies so a clearly designed path for action is set out¹¹
- The disease does not recognise borders and there must be collaboration and sharing of research, data and evidence across legislative regions of the UK and beyond
- Bovine TB not only affects the agricultural economy but has an effect on the wider economy and on taxpayers. Consideration needs to be given to adequately resourcing all aspects of bTB eradication if current targets are to be met. “Investment now will save money in the future”. (Godfray et al 2025:2)¹²
- For the effective long term delivery of the TB Eradication Programme, sustained and consistent support for both the Programme Board and the TAG is paramount. A critical aspect of this governance structure is that the work of both Board and TAG remains strictly independent of political influence¹³.

The Board and the TAG are committed to an holistic approach to the eradication of bTB in Wales. The eradication strategy should be cost effective, using a suite of measures that cause the least amount of harm to the least amount of animals, livestock or wildlife, and all actions must be informed by scientific evidence. Farmers, vets and the wider cattle industry in Wales deserve the opportunity to operate without the threat of bTB in the future, so action is required without delay.

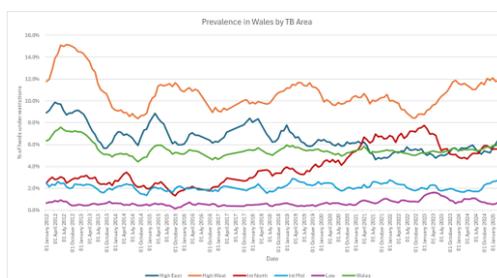
Appendix

¹ WG ‘Bovine TB Dashboard’. The interactive dashboard shows the latest epidemiological surveillance data. <https://www.gov.wales/bovine-tb-dashboards-march-2025>

Data up to and including 2024 shows that herd prevalence, that is the percentage of herds across Wales with active bTB, which are considered not officially TB-Free has remained consistently between 5 and 6 percent.



Assessment of herd incidence, the percentage of new incidents of Bovine TB at officially TB free surveillance tests, at a regional level also shows little improvement.



² Welsh Government TB Eradication Programme (2017); Strategy <https://www.gov.wales/bovine-tb-eradication-programme-strategy> and targets <https://www.gov.wales/bovine-tb-eradication-targets>

³ Welsh Government ‘Delivery Plan 2023’ <https://www.gov.wales/wales-bovine-tb-eradication-programme-delivery-plan-2023>

⁴ The Programme Board consists of publicly appointed members, including active farmers, representatives from the TAG, British Veterinary Association (BVA), Farmers Union of Wales (FUW), NFU Cymru (NFUC), Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), National Trust (NT), Young Farmers Federation Cymru (YFCC) and the Farming Community Network (FCN).

⁵ The Technical Advisory Group provides independent technical and scientific expertise to the Board. TAG membership includes scientists, veterinary professionals and a representative from the Board.

⁶ WOAHA definition of what qualifies for Officially TB Free status: Chapter 8.11 and specifically 8.11.4 https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahc/2018/en_chapitre_bovine_tuberculosis.htm

⁷ The TAG has begun a review of the evidence around current testing and movement strategy. They will also consider developments and innovation in testing before reporting to the Board.

⁸ Farmer Engagement and Bovine TB Task and Finish Group: recommendations 2022 <https://www.gov.wales/farmer-engagement-and-bovine-tb-task-and-finish-group-recommendations>

⁹ Research conducted for Defra in 2020 highlighted the median costs of a breakdown for farming businesses. 'Estimating the consequential cost of bovine TB incidents on cattle farmers in the High Risk & Edge Areas of England & High and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales'. June 2020 <https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectID=19957&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=se3139&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

¹⁰ Smith, W., McCann, J., Phillimore, A. and Jones, L. (2025) The Farming Community Network (FCN) Finding the Box-Top: 'Addressing the human cost of bTB' <https://fcn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/bTB-report-2025-final-Addressing-the-human-cost-of-bTB.pdf>

¹¹ The TAG is currently considering and reporting to the Board on the evidence around wildlife. This will inform advice from the Board to WG.

¹² Godfray et al (2025) Bovine TB Strategy Review Update <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tuberculosis-godfray-evidence-review-update-2025>

¹³ Members of the Board and TAG are appointed for a period of 5 years, allowing them to develop extensive knowledge of all aspects of the issue that is bTB. This allows for a sustained, strategic approach that is essential for a complex and long-term challenge like bTB eradication. It is also critical that the work of the Programme Board and the TAG remain strictly independent of political influence. By operating outside direct political remit, the Programme Board can focus on the scientific and practical realities of TB eradication, making decisions that are driven by expert consensus and the needs of the programme.