

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communications Branch



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: DAERA/26-39

[REDACTED]

Via email:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:[REDACTED]@whatdotheyknow.com)>

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09 March 2026

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Further to our response dated 13 February 2026, please see amended response for figures provided at Question 1 part 2 and Question 2 part 2. I have highlighted these for reference.

I would like to know some specific stats about the success rate of the current testing regime

- 1. How many animals were tested in the last year and how many tested positive**
- 2. Of the positive animals moved to slaughter, how many were revealed to be TB Positive**
- 3. Of the positive animals moved to slaughter, how many were revealed to be TB Negative**
- 4. Of herds that have broken down or are in a regular testing regime, how many animals which previously tested negative on a skin test, were revealed to be TB positive when moved to slaughter**

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds some of the information you requested which is detailed below:

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

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Q1: How many animals were tested in the last year and how many tested positive

There are currently 2 official tests approved for use in EU Approved TB Eradication Programmes and therefore suitable for use in the Northern Ireland Eradication Programme to detect Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) in live cattle.

Routine testing is carried out using the Comparative Intradermal Tuberculin Test (CITT) commonly referred to as the 'skin test'.

In certain circumstances a supplementary test, the Interferon Gamma (IFNg) blood test is also used in addition to the skin test to improve detection of early infection in herds infected with bTB.

1. The number of Comparative Intradermal Tuberculin Test (CITT) 'skin test' positive animals and the total number of animals tested are available in the DAERA published Tuberculosis statistics under Tab E '*Reactor Animals*' and Tab C '*Testing animals*' at the following link:

[Tuberculosis Disease Statistics in Northern Ireland 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.](#)

Please note the December 2025 figures remain provisional and are not yet published as some skin tests conducted in the latter part of the year may require re-interpretation based on TB post-mortem or laboratory results. Also, occasionally a positive reactor animal may die or require euthanasia on farm due to welfare reasons prior to movement to a slaughterhouse. The figures in the published statistics include these animals as they were under notice of intended slaughter.

2. The number of animals Interferon Gamma (IFNg) tested from the 01 January 2025 to the 01 November 2025 totalled 14,160. There were 1002 IFNg Gamma positive animals that were negative to the CITT skin test.

Note, animals that are both positive to the 'skin test' and IFNg test at parallel testing are removed and slaughtered as 'skin test' reactors and therefore are included in the aforementioned DAERA published statistics link.

Q2: Of the positive animals moved to slaughter, how many were revealed to be TB Positive

It is not fully clear from the request if the information requested relates to the number of animals truly infected with TB following a positive response to an official test, or the number of animals that displayed visible TB like lesions at time of slaughter following a positive response to an official test. The answer to both possible requests is outlined below.

1. The number of animals truly infected with TB following a positive response to an official test:

For the purpose of predicting test positive animals as being truly infected with TB ('*TB positive*'), reference must be made to the respective specificity of the CITT skin test and the IFNg blood test.

Further information on this can be found on the following link: [The TB Skin Test | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.](#)

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Extract below explains further:

Specificity is the ability of a test to correctly identify an animal that is free from infection as negative, i.e., the higher the specificity, the lower the probability of classifying an uninfected animal as infected (a false positive result).

The skin test has an excellent test specificity of 99.98%. This means that it is very rare that a non-infected animal will be wrongly classified as diseased.

The IFNg test has a higher sensitivity (it will miss fewer TB-infected animals) but lower specificity (it may wrongly classify more non-infected animals as diseased) compared to the skin test. Due to the lower specificity, this test is currently only used in selected TB breakdown herds in NI as it has a lower specificity compared to the skin test.

2. The number of animals that displayed visible TB like lesions at time of slaughter following a positive response to an official test:

Should your question relate to the disclosure of 'visible TB lesions' at time of slaughter, these are not considered a standard of disease confirmation following a positive test, but rather an indicator of disease progression as the progression to 'visible TB lesions' may take months or years to develop.

The postmortem slaughter and positive bacteriology results are available in the following link:

[Tuberculosis Disease Statistics in Northern Ireland 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

See tab 'Confirmed Disease'. Confirmed disease for the purpose of the statistics meaning the presence of visible lesions at slaughter and/or by laboratory confirmation (histopathology and/or culture). These statistics typically lag, this is attributable to pending laboratory results.

Of the 1002 IFNg Gamma positive only animals that went to slaughter, 250 animals confirmed bTB disease at time of slaughter.

Q3: Of the positive animals moved to slaughter, how many were revealed to be TB Negative

The information under question 2 in respect of test specificity also provides an answer to question 3.

More information on TB reactor post mortem findings at slaughter can be found on the DAERA TB Portal [Diagnosing Bovine TB | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#) and also on the UK's TB Hub [Why 'NVL' doesn't mean no infection with M. bovis - Bovine TB | TB Hub](#). NVL stands for 'No Visible Lesion'.

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Q4: Of herds that have broken down or are in a regular testing regime, how many animals which previously tested negative on a skin test, were revealed to be TB positive when moved to slaughter

This information is contained within the DAERA published TB Statistics [Tuberculosis Disease Statistics in Northern Ireland 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#). See tab detailed '*PM data - not TB skin reactors*'. TB culture positive animals are animals where Bovine TB (bTB) was cultured from TB like lesions found at slaughter. Again, these statistics typically lag, this is attributable to pending laboratory results. There is also useful information regarding the possible reasons for this on the DAERA TB Portal [Diagnosing Bovine TB | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#).

If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

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