

Recent Changes To Tuberculosis Accreditation Scheme.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The present Tuberculosis Accreditation Scheme was instigated by N.Z. Deer Farmers Association in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Deer Branch of N.Z.V.A. It has been up and running now for nearly two years and although of a voluntary nature, is providing a practical and logical methodology to achieving the aims of the scheme.

- 1.e.1) To reduce (or eliminate) bovine tuberculosis in farmed deer.
- 2) To prevent or reduce the spread of bovine tuberculosis from infected herds.

The degree of acceptance of the scheme is indicated in the following table.

TABLE 1. T.B. TESTING STATISTICS. (February 1987)

No. of Deer Farms in Accreditation Scheme.	1147
No. of Deer Farms under Disease Control.	416
No. of Deer Farms with confirmed Bovine T.B.	165
No. of Deer Farms T.B. Accredited.	95
Proportion of Deer Farms in Accreditation Scheme.	33%.

After the implementation of the T.B. Accreditation Scheme it became apparent that some aspects of the scheme needed to be reviewed and changed. Submissions and suggestions were received from deer farmers, D.F.A. members, M.A.F. and veterinarians as to possible anomalies or improvements that could be made to the existing scheme, and these were all addressed. Consequently, there have been some minor changes, although the aims and intent of the overall scheme have not changed.

2. FORMAT OF SCHEME. (See appended schedule of "Rules".)

The format of the "Scheme for the Accreditation of Deer Herds as Tuberculosis Free" as printed in the booklet "Tuberculin Testing of Deer" has changed to provide a more logical and understandable approach to the Accreditation Scheme.

It begins with a series of definitions of relevant terms, continues with the general conditions of the T.B. Scheme, and then goes onto paragraphs pertaining to Testing Requirements and changing herd data.

3. CHANGES WITHIN TUBERCULOSIS ACCREDITATION SCHEME.

3.1. HERD DEFINITION.

This has been changed to more formally recognise a deer farm as having an individual handling facility. This will overcome the obvious problem of several deer units being set up all using a common facility.

3.2. TEST ELIGIBLE ANIMALS

This now recognises specific animals required for testing in endemic and non endemic T.B. areas. It also makes allowances for venison production units in that where there is no evidence of T.B. in a herd, males two years and older need only be presented for a whole herd test.

3.3. WHOLE HERD TEST.

The time over which a whole herd test on all test eligible animals must be performed is within a three month period.

3.4. TESTING REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE ACCREDITATION.

Accreditation is achieved with three consecutive clear tests over a minimum period of two years. These tests should ideally be twelve months apart, but a minimum interval of six months and a maximum interval of eighteen months is now acceptable.

It is also recommended under the new rules that herds which introduce feral animals from endemic T.B. areas cannot achieve accreditation. These endemic areas are designated by the M.A.F. This addresses the debate over the propriety of allowing deer from the feral environment to be introduced to accredited herds without satisfying the accreditation requirement by definition.

3.5. INTRODUCTION OF DEER TO A HERD.

The pre-sale test interval has been extended to sixty days from thirty days. This has mainly practical implications without compromising the intent of the scheme. A sixty day interval gives more latitude for a sale to be negotiated and an opportunity to reduce the isolation period on the buyers' farm.

3.6. NEW ESTABLISHED HERDS

Newly established farms can attain the T.B. status of the herd of origin. If there is more than one herd of origin, it assumes the lowest testing status of the herds. Thus, a new herd can be accredited immediately if the source of stock is an accredited herd. However, if stock are sourced from a property under D.C.P, the movement control notice does not accompany these animals, but the farm commences from a nil testing status.

3.7. IMPORTED DEER.

Deer being imported into the country moving directly from the quarantine station to the farm have the status of deer belonging to the scheme, with the exception of accredited status. This acknowledges the testing procedure which had been undertaken in quarantine.

3.8. CERTIFICATION.

Special mention is now made of the formal recording of whole herd T.B. tests on M.A.F. supplied AgL 202 with copies for M.A.F., farmer and the veterinarian. This certificate has been recently updated also to incorporate:

- a) Recognition of deer held for C.C.T
- b) A disclaimer protecting the veterinarian from liabilities for negligent mis-statement which were never intended.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

The rules for the T.B. Accreditation Scheme appear to be relatively well accepted by the industry, however, continual re-appraisal will be necessary depending on the ability of the scheme to achieve its aims, and the practicality of implementation. Involvement with the scheme by farmers and the understanding and implementation of its intent, is creating increased demands on veterinarians to attain a satisfactory testing standard, and also creating market pressures on farmers who are not yet involved in the T.B. Accreditation Program.

A copy of the revised rules of the accreditation scheme are appended.

SCHEME FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF DEER HERDS AS TUBERCULOSIS FREE

This scheme for the accreditation of deer herds as tuberculosis free was instigated by the New Zealand Deer Farmers Assn in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the New Zealand Veterinary Association. The scheme is promoted by the NZDFA Council and is administered by MAF. Testing is performed by the farmer's veterinarian.

Difficulties with the scheme's implementation and suggestions for improvement are considered by a committee comprising members of the NZDFA Council, the Deer Branch of NZVA and MAF.

Enquiries should be addressed to:-

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1 DEFINITIONS

For the interpretation of the rules of this scheme the following definitions will apply:

1.1 Owner

The person who is effectively in charge of the herd on a day to day basis.

1.2 Herd

All the deer managed as one deer unit with deer handling facilities used only for deer of that unit.

1.3 Tuberculosis

The disease caused by Mycobacterium bovis.

1.4 Endemic Areas

Areas designated by MAF as having a persistent cattle tuberculosis problem associated with tuberculous possums. Of New Zealand's 12 endemic areas, three are considered to be major; the central North Island, the south-eastern North Island, and the West Coast of the South Island.

1.5 Test

A MAF/NZVA approved procedure using the tuberculin and or ancillary tests to determine the presence or absence of tuberculosis. Guidelines for the application of the tests and their interpretation are published in a booklet "Tuberculin Testing of Deer".

1.5.1 Tuberculin Test:

The standard test is the intradermal cervical bovine tuberculin test.

1.5.2 Ancillary Test:

A test (e.g. comparative cervical test) which may be applied by the testing veterinarian in accordance with the guidelines.

1.6 Test Eligible Animals

1.6.1 Non-endemic Tuberculosis Areas:

(a) Non-accredited herds:

- (i) where there is evidence of tuberculosis; all deer 6 months of age and older must be tested;
- (ii) where there is no evidence of tuberculosis; all females 6 months and older, and males 2 years and older must be tested.

Younger animals may be included in either of the above circumstances and is strongly recommended in infected herds.

(b) Accredited herds:

Only adult breeding stock (females 15 months or more and herd sires) need be tested. There is of course no restriction on testing younger animals also, if the owner wishes.

1.6.2 Endemic Tuberculosis Areas:

(a) Non-accredited herds:

- (i) where there is evidence of tuberculosis; all deer 6 months of age and older must be tested;
- (ii) where there is no evidence of tuberculosis; all females 6 months and older, and males 2 years and older must be tested.

(b) Accredited herds:

All female deer 6 months of age and older, and all males 2 years of age and older must be tested.

1.7 Reactor

Animals identified by a veterinarian as animals which are to be destroyed as the result of a test.

1.8 Whole Herd Test

A test performed on all test eligible animals in the owner's herd within a three month period.

1.9 Quarantine

If tuberculosis is confirmed or suspected in the herd then MAF will serve a Disease Control Place Notice (DCP) to the owner. The purpose of this notice is to control the movement of deer from infected properties. Following the destruction of any reactor or clinical animal, infected herds shall remain under a DCP notice until the completion of two clear whole herd tests at a minimum interval of 6 months.

2 GENERAL CONDITIONS

2.1 Persons wishing to join the scheme will do so by completing the appropriate application form (available from MAF offices) before the initial herd test.

2.2 The application form is signed by the owner.

2.3 Any reactors to tuberculin tests carried out prior to the date of application must have been destroyed.

2.4 Within 3 months of joining the scheme the owner must start the first whole herd test.

2.5 All testing will be arranged between the owner and his/her veterinarian.

2.6 The owner must provide facilities for the testing of his/her animals that are acceptable to the testing veterinarian.

2.7 Whole herd tests should preferably be completed in one day. Where this is not practical, testing of different mobs on different days is acceptable as long as all test eligible animals are tested within 3 months.

2.8 Responsibility for ensuring that whole herd and miscellaneous tests are carried out according to the testing requirements lies with the owner.

2.9 Certification

All testing must be reported on the 'Veterinarian's Test Report' (MAF form AgL 202). The owner retains the original and the testing veterinarian is required to submit one copy to MAF.

3 TESTING REQUIREMENTS TO ACHIEVE ACCREDITED STATUS

- 3.1 When a herd has had a minimum of 3 consecutive clear whole herd tests over a period of not less than 2 years, the herd will achieve accredited status. The 3 tests should ideally be 12 months apart but the minimum interval may be 6 months and the maximum interval 18 months.
- 3.2 Herds which introduce feral deer from endemic areas cannot achieve accredited status.

4 TESTING REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN ACCREDITED STATUS

4.1 Non-Endemic tuberculosis Areas

Accredited herds must be re-tested at intervals not exceeding 2 years commencing from the date of accreditation. A clear whole herd test will ensure that the herd remains accredited for a further maximum period of 2 years from the date of the last clear whole herd test.

4.2 Endemic Tuberculosis Areas

In districts designated as endemic tuberculosis areas (such as Wairarapa, King Country and West Coast) the frequency of re-tests will be the same as for cattle. The local MAF veterinarian shall define the areas and the required frequency.

5 TESTING REQUIREMENTS IF A CLEAR WHOLE HERD TEST IS NOT OBTAINED

- 5.1 All reactors must be destroyed within 30 days of a condemnation order being served by MAF.
- 5.2 Destruction of reactors must be under the supervision of MAF or the testing veterinarian.
- 5.3 The whole herd must be re-tested within the ensuing 6 months.

6 INTRODUCTION OR RETURN OF DEER TO THE HERD

The owner must ensure that the following conditions are observed and make the necessary arrangements with his/her veterinarian for any testing on the farm.

6.1 For Non-Accredited Herds:

- 6.1.1 Animals being introduced from an accredited herd need not be tested.
- 6.1.2 Animals being introduced from another herd which is testing in compliance with the scheme and which is not under quarantine must have been tested within 60 days prior to arrival.
- 6.1.3 Animals being introduced from a herd that is either under quarantine or not within the accreditation scheme must:
- (a) have passed a tuberculin test within 60 days prior to arrival, and
 - (b) be kept in isolation until they have passed another test no sooner than 60 days after the previous test. Farmers are encouraged to test as soon as practicable after this period.
- 6.1.4 Animals captured from the wild must be kept in isolation until they have passed 2 tuberculin tests at least 60 days apart.

6.2 For Accredited Herds:

- 6.2.1 Deer shall not be introduced from herds that are either under quarantine, or outside the accreditation scheme.
- 6.2.2 Animals from accredited herds may be admitted without testing or isolation.
- 6.2.3 Animals from herds undergoing accreditation but not under quarantine must:
- (a) have passed a tuberculin test within 60 days prior to arrival, and
 - (b) be kept in isolation until they have passed another test no sooner than 60 days after the previous test. Farmers are encouraged to test as soon as practicable after this period.
- 6.2.4 Feral animals captured from non-endemic areas must be kept in isolation until they have passed two tuberculin tests at least 60 days apart.
- 6.2.4.1 Feral animals from endemic areas may not be introduced to accredited herds.

6.3 Newly Established Herds:

The testing status of newly established herds shall generally be that of the herd(s) of origin with the lowest testing status, but MAF shall have discretion.

6.4 Deer Imported From Overseas:

Deer moving directly from the quarantine station have the status of deer belonging to the scheme but not accredited status.

7 CANCELLATION OR SUSPENSION OF ACCREDITED OR TESTING STATUS

7.1 Accreditation may be suspended by MAF if any animal in the herd is suspected to be tuberculous.

7.2 Accreditation or testing toward accredited status will be cancelled by MAF if any animal from the herd is found to be tuberculous.

7.3 Accreditation or testing toward accredited status will be cancelled or suspended by MAF if any of the above rules are violated by the owner such as failure to deal with introduced animals in accordance with the rules or failure to re-test the herd according to requirements.

7.4 Re-instatement of accreditation or testing toward accredited status after suspension will be at the discretion of MAF.