



VETERINARY ISSUES

NZVA Deer Tb Testing Quality Assurance Scheme: An Update S. Hutchings

Introduction

This paper gives an update on the current status of the NZVA Deer Tb Testing QA Scheme and outlines changes that are likely to be occurring over the next twelve months. These are changes to accreditation standards and qualifications to Tb test deer and/or cattle, the Animal Health Board (AHB) development of minimum competency standards for existing and new Tb testing QA schemes, and the National Quality Veterinary Services Ltd (NQVS) role in developing a cattle Tb testing QA scheme .

Current Status

At the time of writing (March 1999) the NZVA Deer Tb Testing QA Scheme had a total of 262 veterinarians registered, and 145 certificated as Veterinary Testing Officers (VTOs).

At present the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) has given temporary accreditation to all veterinarians registered with the scheme. This accreditation is conferred via an official instrument of accreditation document, which can be for either deer or deer and cattle. The cattle accreditation is only applied to those veterinarians who are currently subcontracted to AgriQuality, and thus fall under their quality systems. The temporary accreditation lasts until June 30th 1999. From July 1st 1999 only certificated VTOs under the NZVA QA Scheme will continue to be accredited to Tb test deer

The new accreditation will be for a period of three (3) years, unless failure to comply with Tb QA Scheme specifications results in a recommendation to the CVO for removal from the approved list.

Conditional Accreditation

Conditional accreditation has been introduced to deal with the situation of training for a new provisional Testing Officer joining the Tb Testing QA Scheme. Under the Biosecurity Act (1993) only inspectors, accredited, or authorised persons may Tb test deer or cattle. This does not allow for people to develop practical skills in the field, or for an intermediate stage following removal of full accreditation for non-compliance reasons.

Conditional accreditation allows for a provisional testing officer to apply an approved Tb test under the direct supervision of accredited person. This implies that the accredited person is present while the test is being undertaken. Conditional accreditation is given for a period of one year.

AHB Minimum Competency Standards

The AHB have recently been meeting with representatives from NZVA and Deer Branch, TQSC, NQVS, MAF Regulatory Authority and AgriQuality to develop a set of minimum competency standards that will be used by the AHB to assess adequacy of any new, or existing, Tb testing QA schemes that are used to qualify Tb testing officers under the Pest Management Strategy.

These standards were completed and signed off as accepted by the CVO in February 1999, and are included in the following section. The time frame is now that new and existing schemes need to be presented to the AHB for approval prior to the new accreditation period beginning on July 1st 1999. This will involve some additional sections and alteration of other sections of the manual of the Deer Tb Testing QA Scheme. The manual is currently being updated and the new addition will be sent out following AHB approval.

ANIMAL HEALTH BOARD. DISEASE CONTROL MINIMUM SPECIFICATION OF COMPETENCE FOR THE PURPOSES OF ACCREDITATION FOR TB TESTING UNDER THE BIOSECURITY ACT.

The Accredited Person shall:

- 1) demonstrate an understanding of the Animal Health Board's goals and objectives, and display conduct which maintains the integrity of the Tb Pest Management Strategy.
- 2) not have any criminal convictions or been the subject of professional disciplinary measures, or when these convictions or disciplinary measures have occurred, these in the opinion of the Chief Veterinary Officer, should not bring into disrepute the persons ability to undertake the work or the public perception of that persons integrity.
- 3) effectively communicate with stock owners or persons in charge of animals with respect to.
 - a) arranging a Tb test
 - b) undertaking a Tb test
 - c) conveying the results of a Tb test
 - d) implications associated with the results of a Tb test
 - e) the Animal Health Board's policies listed under specification Number 7 d)
- 4) be competent in the understanding and implementation of safe working practices.
- 5) demonstrate an understanding of how to:
 - a) safeguard themselves and other people from becoming infected by animal disease;
 - b) avoid the spread of animal disease from animal to animal;
 - c) avoid the spread of animal disease from farm to farm.
- 6) demonstrate the ability to assess that testing facilities are adequate for:
 - a) the safety, hygiene and welfare of animals, and
 - b) the safety and hygiene of the testing officer.

- 7) demonstrate understanding in the following areas:
 - a) the legal rights of persons when entering land for the purposes of arranging or performing a Tb test;
 - b) whether animals are fit to be Tb tested;
 - c) the information contained within the Animal Health Board Tb Allocation Form;
 - d) Animal Health Board policies on:
 - i) the release of personal information;
 - ii) approved Tb tests for cattle and / or deer;
 - iii) on farm Tb testing programmes;
 - iv) compensation for reactor slaughter;
 - v) movement control restrictions for cattle/deer (herd and area control)
 - vi) the system for classifying the Tb status of a herd.
- 8) be competent in the scheduling of Tb tests.
- 9) demonstrate the ability to classify cattle and/or deer by:
 - a) Age
 - i) Cattle up to 6 weeks, up to 3 months, Rising 1 year, Rising 2 year, and adult,
 - ii) Deer up to 6 months, Rising 1 year, Rising 2 year, and adult.

Accredited persons are not required to establish the age of each animal to the nearest month but must be able to establish the correct age category.
 - b) Gender
 - i) Cattle: Male/Bull, Female/Cow or Heifer, Castrated Male/Steer or Bullock;
 - ii) Deer: Male/Stag or Buck or Bull or Spiker, Female/Hind or Cow, or Doe.
- 10) demonstrate the ability to classify herd by type using their knowledge of management practices and animal breeds within a given herd. Types of herd are defined as:

Cattle: Dairy, Dairy Dry, Beef Breeding, Beef Dry, Miscellaneous;

Deer: Breeding, Velveting, Miscellaneous, Hunting Estate
- 11) demonstrate the ability to test cattle and/or deer for Tb and interpret those tests in accordance with:
 - a) the policies of the Animal Health Board;
 - b) any prohibitions or controls imposed by the Chief Technical Officer,
 - c) the provisions of the Biosecurity (National Bovine Tuberculosis Pest Management Strategy) Order 1998.
- 11) be able to maintain an accurate register of official Animal Health Board ear tags and their use, and be proficient in their insertion and removal.
- 12) be competent in the accurate completion of Tb Allocation Forms, and understand and comply with Animal Health Board policies for the forwarding of forms both for data processing and to the farmer.

The Animal Health Board is currently designing protocols by which it can assess QA schemes to ascertain whether they meet the minimum criteria outlined here. Both the existing Deer Tb QA Scheme and the intended Cattle Testing Scheme are set at a level above the minimum specifications. It is intended that veterinarians once qualified will have an ability to provide Tb control advice to farmer clients or on a regional basis as well as be competent in the process of Tb testing.

National Quality Veterinary Services Ltd

NQVS Ltd. is a company owned by the New Zealand Veterinary Association and was set up initially to bid for national contracts on behalf of veterinary practitioners if and when they came up for tender. The company has now been given the brief to build a Cattle Tb Testing Quality Assurance Scheme on parallel lines to the Deer Scheme. This scheme will then allow veterinarians to become accredited to Tb test cattle and position them for potential changes to contracts in Tb testing and control.

The Deer Tb Testing QA Scheme will eventually move in to NQVS so both deer and cattle are run under the same umbrella.

The other potential roles of NQVS in terms of pursuit of National Contracts and provision of marketable QA Schemes to other sectors of the profession is currently under debate and will be discussed in other papers presented at this conference. NQVS is currently underwritten by NZVA, Deer Branch, Sheep and Beef Branch, and the Dairy Cattle Society but could have representation from any sector of the veterinary profession.