

## **UFU Comments on the Main Aspects of TB Control and Eradication:**

**Bio-security measures:** Biosecurity undoubtedly plays an important role in controlling the spread of TB. The adopting of such measures however to prevent cattle to cattle spread or the incursion of wildlife can be both very difficult and extremely costly and as a minimum must be incentivised at farm level.

**Testing:** The tuberculin test is not perfect but DARD consider it is the best test currently available. It can be expected to detect approximately 75% of infected cattle at any one test with herds in which reactors are found being tested a number of times in order to give the best chance of eliminating infection from the herd. The test does however wrongly classify a non-infected animal as diseased less than once in 1,000 times and some cows may be less likely to give a positive reaction if they are close to calving. The test may also occasionally miss an infected animal, which may show evidence of disease later when it is slaughtered.

Testing in general is a significant burden to farmers costing both time and money and contributes to over 70% of the on-farm administrative burden associated with TB.

**Cattle Movements:** The UFU believe that Northern Ireland's TB programme is one of the most robust in Europe with regard to cattle movements. Herd restrictions can cause very significant issues for farmers. The UFU have been asking for some time that Alternative Control Herds, as in GB and ROI, are established in Northern Ireland. However, the UFU feel that the subsequently introduced requirements regarding Alternative Control Herds need to be revised in order to make this option more viable.

**Compensation:** The UFU's position on compensation is very clear. Until the outstanding TB control issue of disease in wildlife is adequately addressed our members are unwilling to consider any changes to the existing compensation arrangements for TB.

**Vaccination:** The UFU recognises that vaccination could have a very important role to play in the control of TB however there are very real legislative and practical problems with the development and availability of an effective vaccine for either cattle or badgers.

**Dealing with TB in Wildlife:** This is the key priority for the UFU and we firmly believe that TB will never be eradicated if the disease is not dealt with in wildlife. While we support the operation of the now significantly delayed and 'watered down' TVR project, it is essential that the ongoing findings from this Project are made available with wider action being taken based on preliminary conclusions including alternative control measures if these are inconclusive.

### **Conclusion:**

Cattle control measures are only one aspect of dealing with the disease and until meaningful action is taken to deal with all sources of the disease, particularly wildlife, farmers will have to continue to carry the burden of an ineffective policy. A series of measures must be implemented immediately to allow progress towards eradication to be made.