Farmers’ attitudes to a risk based trading scheme for cattle in England

Prepared for: Defra TB Risk Based Trading Working Group

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Executive Summary

Bovine TB is one of the most difficult animal health problems facing England’s cattle farmers. The Bovine TB Eradication Programme for England, published in July 2011, made the commitment to “look at the feasibility of options for a TB risk-based trading system for cattle”. Following a recommendation from the Farming Regulation Task Force1, Defra has worked jointly with industry stakeholders to develop options for risk-based/informed trading. This work has been led by a working group convened by Defra including cattle farmers, veterinarians, auctioneers and other stakeholders.

The working group were asked to present a report of its recommendations to Ministers on options for a risk based trading scheme (RBTS) with the objective of identifying a system (or systems) that would provide farmers with relevant and appropriate information to enable them to make more informed decisions about the TB risk of cattle they are buying or receiving. The research reported here was designed to support the activities of the working group by providing evidence on the type of scheme that might have a good chance of success and what factors might need to be taken into account when developing (and subsequently implementing) such a scheme.

The work comprised of 3 discrete but inter-connected elements: one-to-one interviews with auctioneers, farmers (attending markets as either buyers or sellers) and veterinary professionals; a series of focus-group meetings with cattle farmers and traders; and a detailed telephone survey of 200 cattle farmers. The survey and focus group sample was designed to be (as far as possible) representative of the cattle industry in England including type (i.e. beef or dairy) size of holding and associated TB risk status within the individual geographic location. For the telephone survey, farmers were also selected on the basis of having at least 5 batch movements (not to slaughter) in one of the last 3 years (2009 – 2011) and has a current herd size of >10. Personal interviews were conducted at three livestock markets, selected to be illustrative of experiences in areas considered to be ‘low’, ‘edge of risk’ or ‘high’ TB risk.

There are a number of key themes that can be identified from the interviews, focus groups and telephone questionnaire work. These are:

- There were differences in farmer attitude to a RBTS according to the prevailing TB risk status in their own area. In particular, there was less of an ‘appetite’ for a voluntary RBTS in those areas of high and edge of risk TB risk. This represents a considerable challenge to overcome when developing and in particular, when implementing a RBTS. If a suitable scheme were to be established, the evidence suggests that most feel they would derive some benefit from the information.

- Although by no means unanimous, the consensus view was that a voluntary scheme would be less likely to succeed than a mandatory approach, particularly in those areas where there was a high degree of scepticism about the perceived value of such a scheme.

- Most concern about the disclosure of additional TB risk information came from sellers with cattle with poor TB status who felt that this would compromise their trade and potentially undermine their reputation. In particular, there was reluctance to disclose previous positive TB tests and TB status of the herd, which were generally viewed by buyers as being information of particular value. Auctioneers in high and edge of risk areas were similarly

uncomfortable about disclosing information that might adversely affect trade for their customers.

- In general, farmers were unwilling (or unable) to isolate and post-movement test newly-purchased cattle and often appeared to have little appreciation of the value that these practices could have in reducing the risk of introducing TB.

- Irrespective of what information might ultimately be provided by a RBTS, the most widely favoured approach for disclosing information was the use of big-screen technology at the point of sale. This was followed by information provided in a sale catalogue. The development of an on-line database for use directly by farmers was not generally favoured by that group. This contrasted with vets and auctioneers who were generally keen to use this approach. A workable approach could be for auctioneers to gather TB risk information via an on-line database and relay this to farmers at markets via large screen technology or a sale catalogue. The use of a system based around existing cattle passports did not generally receive support. There was general agreement across the board that a paper-based system was not a viable or preferred approach. All parties involved in cattle trade were concerned about the additional administrative and associated costs.

- Although most buyers placed a great deal of value on accessing information direct from sellers at the point of sale, less credence was placed on self-certification of TB status compared to third party verification by AHVLA or private vets. Although restricted to a small number of vet interviews, the consensus was that private vets could play an important role in communicating TB risk (and therefore in RBTS) which would exploit the status and credibility that the professional vet enjoys with cattle farmers.

- A bespoke scheme for TB disclosure is currently in operation at a livestock market (low risk area) that took part in this current work. Whilst the scheme was reported to be working well, it was also reported to have significantly increased administrative costs. The increased costs are accompanied by a decrease in trade as Scottish buyers tend to only purchase animals that do not require post movement testing. However, the market considers that its TB disclosure scheme has been successful in maintaining a significant volume of trade with Scotland.

- There often appeared to be a general lack of knowledge amongst some farmers and traders about TB transfer mechanisms e.g. wildlife to cattle and cattle to cattle. It was felt that this lack of understanding might indirectly limit or negatively impact on the impact of a future RBTS.

The results of this study were presented to the Working Group for consideration during the development of their recommendations to Ministers.
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Background**

Bovine TB is one of the most difficult animal health problems facing England’s cattle farmers. The Bovine TB Eradication Programme for England, published in July 2011, made the commitment to “look at the feasibility of options for a TB risk-based trading system for cattle”. Following a recommendation from the Farming Regulation Task Force, Defra is working jointly “with industry stakeholders to develop options for risk-based/informed trading during 2012 with a view to introducing changes by the end of the year”. This work has been led by a working group including cattle farmers, veterinarians, auctioneers and other stakeholders.

The role of the working group is to make recommendations on options which could be implemented within a relatively short timescale (approximately one year), in order to improve the information that farmers can access about the TB risk of cattle they are buying or receiving. The aim of a risk based trading scheme would be to empower farmers to make better informed cattle trading decisions, and take greater responsibility for managing the TB risk of their herd, as part of wider industry and government efforts to help stop the spread of TB.

The research reported here is designed to provide the working group with evidence on what type of scheme has a good chance of success including: what risk information sellers would disclose and buyers use, what form they would like the information to be in and which types of business it should be launched with. As well as helping the group’s immediate short term work, this research will inform the development and implementation of the scheme and provide baseline data against which to evaluate its relative success in the future. Defra has separately commissioned veterinary epidemiological analysis and modelling of possible risk-based trading schemes.

1.2 **Aims and objectives**

The overall aim of this research project is to provide socio-economic evidence to help design and establish a risk-based trading scheme for cattle in England. The scheme will enable farmers selling cattle to give information to potential buyers in a standard form about the Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) risk status of their cattle or herd.

The specific objectives of this study were to investigate the views of buyers and sellers of cattle that are moving “to live” rather than to slaughter. This includes cattle that will become replacement breeding stock in the purchasing herd (either dairy or suckler), cattle that will be finished for beef and any other intermediate stages.

2. **Methodology**

The aims and objectives of the study have been met using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research activities, including:

- personal interviews with veterinarians, auctioneers and/or other relevant organisations;
- focus groups with cattle farmers; and
- telephone survey of farmers

2.1 **Personal interviews**

Personal interviews were conducted with a total of three auctioneers at three livestock markets – one in a high TB risk area (HRA), one in an edge of risk area and one in a low TB risk area (LRA) where there is significant cross border trade with Scotland.
During these visits, approximately 40 farmers were approached for interview and 21 of these agreed to take part. The types of sales visited and number of buyers and sellers interviewed at each market can be summarised as follows:

High risk area – pedigree continental beef cattle – 3 buyers and 3 sellers

Edge of risk area – general store sale, including dispersal sale of 70 South Devon cattle (predominantly cows with calves at foot) – 5 buyers and 3 sellers

Low risk area – pedigree dairy cattle sale (with simultaneous calf sale) – 4 buyers and 3 sellers

Two vets were selected for interviews. One from a large practice close to the market in the low risk area, and the other a cattle vet from a high risk area.

The questionnaire template used for this part of the work is given in Appendix 1 of a separate annex that accompanies this report.

2.2 Focus groups

Three focus groups were conducted in three locations, each comprising 8-10 participants. The focus group locations were selected to represent high, edge of risk and low TB risk areas and also enable the views of those farmers trading with Scotland to be collected. The locations were similar to those used for the personal interviews.

Table 1: Focus group locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>TB risk</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria</td>
<td>Low TB risk, trading with Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>Edge of risk area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>High TB risk</td>
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</table>

The focus groups were conducted between 7th and 20th November 2012.

Farmers were recruited to the groups by telephone from contact lists supplied by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). AHVLA supplied 100 contacts within a 30 mile radius of each of the markets in the three locations. Based on AHVLA records the contacts met the following criteria:

1. All current live farms in England
2. Have had at least 5 batch movements (not to slaughter) in one of the last 3 years (2009 – 2011), at least two of these movements must have been an “on” movement
3. Current herd size (Jan 2012) >= 10

A random selection of 100 farms meeting the above criteria was drawn for each location. The random selection criteria aimed to ensure we obtained a sample of farms representative of that area in terms of testing interval, geographic spread, dairy versus beef, herd size, history of TB restricted movements, farm to farm and farm to market movements.

Each of the three groups comprised a mix of dairy and beef farmers, and a mix of herd sizes. The type and size of cattle enterprises reported by focus group participants are shown in the annex to this report (Table 1, Appendix 4).

The group sessions lasted 1.5 – 2 hours and followed a topic guide previously agreed with Defra. The topic guide is included within the appendix to this report. Each group was
moderated by an experienced market researcher, with technical assistance from an ADAS livestock consultant.

The questionnaire template used for this part of the work is given in the Annex – Appendix 2.

2.3 Telephone survey of cattle farmers

A telephone survey of 200 cattle farmers in England comprised a randomly selected sample representative of herd type, herd size, and cattle trading practices. Interviews were split equally between high and low TB risk areas, a target of 100 interviews for each. A letter was prepared in consultation with Defra and sent to each of the contacts to introduce the project, outline the purpose of the survey and describe how the replies were to be used.

The telephone questionnaire was developed in consultation with the Defra working group. A copy of the final questionnaire is provided for reference in Appendix 3. Telephone interviews were carried out between 29th October and 16th November 2012.

A total of 1200 contacts were selected at random by AHVLA from the Cattle Trading System (CTS) database with 100 interviews to be conducted with farms in parishes with a 1-2 year testing interval (representing high and edge of risk TB areas) and 100 with farms in parishes with a 3-4 year testing interval (low TB risk). The contacts met the following criteria:

- All current live farms in England
- Have had at least 5 batch movements (not to slaughter) in one of the last 3 years (2009 – 2011) of which at least two of the movements must have been an “on” movement
- Current herd size (January 2012) >= 10
- Sample was split into those farms currently in 1 & 2 yearly tested parishes (Farm list 1-2) and those in 3 & 4 yearly tested parishes (Farm list 3-4)
- Random selection of 600 farms from Farm list 1-2 and 600 from Farm list 3-4, in order to achieve 100 interviews with farms in parishes with a 1-2 year testing interval, and 100 with farms in parishes with a 3-4 years testing interval. The random selection criteria ensured a representative sample of farms that meet the inclusion criteria within a) 1-2 year and b) 3-4 year testing interval areas, in terms of geographic spread, dairy versus beef, herd size, history of TB restricted movements, farm to farm and farm to market movements.
3. Results

3.1 Personal interviews

3.1.1 Auctioneers’ attitudes to a risk based trading scheme for TB

The three auctioneers interviewed were all familiar with the concept of a risk based trading scheme for TB and had already considered how such a scheme might be integrated within their normal daily business of selling cattle. Currently, the markets in the high risk area and edge of risk area do not automatically provide information on the TB status of the animals being sold, apart from the date of pre-movement testing (PrMT), where applicable. If animals have been pre-movement tested, this identifies them as being from a PTI1 (1 year parish testing interval) or 2. However, the main reason for displaying PrMT information is for traders who want to sell animals on. The auctioneers working in the high risk area and the edge of risk area both felt that:

- If farmers who had recently been under TB restrictions were required to declare this at the point of sale, this would disadvantage these farmers in selling their animals
- Farmers buying at their markets did not want more information on TB status
- If they were to provide more information to prospective buyers, this would require additional staffing, thus incurring additional expense. In essence, they felt that it would be a ‘lose: lose’ situation. More cost to the market and an adverse affect on trade

In the high risk area in particular, the auctioneer was concerned that a RBTS for bTB would adversely affect trading for many farmers in the area. He expressed a view that a scheme might reduce the trading opportunities for farmers in HRAs and so reduce the level of trade at the market.

In the edge of risk area, the auctioneer appreciated the benefits of a scheme, but was concerned about the adverse affect on some farmers, and the increased workload at the market. This will be a key challenge to face when developing and subsequently implementing a RBTS.

In the low risk area, the situation was very different. The auctioneer here explained how the changes in TB regulations in Scotland had meant that the market would have lost a significant amount of trade if it had not embraced the changes and adopted a scheme to inform buyers of the TB status of animals being sold. This had involved a significant increase in administration work at the market, and trade had decreased (particularly numbers presented at pedigree sales), but the market seemed to be working with the changes and looking at ways to maintain trade. The fall in trade has been mainly due to farmers with pedigree stock from PTI1 or 2 areas no longer bringing them to the market to sell, as the demand for cattle from PTI1 or 2 herds has decreased markedly. The market has responded to this by holding additional pedigree sales at locations in PTI1 areas.

At the low risk area market, all animals being sold are given a code to denote their TB status, and this is shown on the electronic screen at the time of sale. If an animal enters the ring and the information is not available, the animal is withdrawn from sale and presented later, when the information is available. The TB coding at this market is as follows:

- 4S means that the animal is moving off a PTI4 holding, and has always been on a PTI4 holding
- 4 means that the animal is moving from a PTI4 holding, but it has not always been on a PTI4 holding
• 3, 2 or 1 indicate that the animal is moving from a PTI3, PTI2 or PTI1 holding respectively

These distinctions are vital for Scottish buyers (hence the 'S') to know whether or not animals will be required to be isolated and post-movement tested. According to the auctioneer at the low risk area market, Scottish buyers are unlikely to purchase animals that must be post movement tested, unless they are of exceptional quality.

Awareness of animal health status with respect to endemic diseases also varied considerably between the three auctioneers. In the low risk area, the auctioneer had a good understanding of how an animal's BVD status might be reported, e.g. tested BVD virus free, as opposed to BVD vaccinated. Once again, this is partly in response to the regulations imposed under the Scottish BVD Eradication Scheme. Conversely, in the high risk area, the auctioneer showed limited understanding of BVD, and of the vendors' declarations about their animals.

**Auctioneers views on how a risk based trading scheme might work**

At the low risk area market, a scheme is already working well. The introduction of increased regulation governing the movement of animals into Scotland has affected trade in this area, with falling demand for animals either directly from, or that have ever been on, a PTI1 or PTI2 holding. The market has responded by introducing the scheme described above (Paragraph 3.1.1) giving farmers the information they require on the TB status of an animal. Currently, market staff check every animal's movement history from its passport, and check the Parish Testing Interval (PTI) of each holding that the animal has been on. This takes time and involves potential for human error. The auctioneer would like to have a database whereby the animal's passport could be scanned in and this would bring up the animal's history and an indicator of TB status. For animals that have required pre-movement testing, the market requires the farmer to bring a copy of the TB test chart. This information could also be available on the database.

There was no scheme in place at the markets in the high risk and edge of risk area. Both auctioneers favoured an on-line database, as described above. At these markets, self certification is used to ascertain the date of pre-movement testing. The percentage of animals that will have required pre-movement testing is much greater than in the low risk area, and the markets have found it impractical to check TB test charts, or to hold copies.

There was concern by the auctioneer at the high risk area market that it would be difficult and time consuming to provide details of an animals TB history when it was not moving from its holding of birth. He felt it would not be practical for market staff to check the movement history on each animal's passport as is being done at the low risk area market. An on-line database providing information on TB history and status was felt to be the only practical way for the market to obtain this information.

At all three markets, the proposal to introduce any sort of paper-based scheme was very unpopular.

**Auctioneers' perceptions of barriers to success of a risk based trading scheme**

The scheme in place in the low risk area market is working well. The measures in question were implemented to address Scottish regulations affecting trade and required the market to absorb the cost of recruiting additional staff to carry out the extra work involved in tracing the animals’ history.

In the high risk and edge of risk area, the auctioneers were sceptical about the success of a voluntary scheme because they feel that farmers are not interested. This perception of a lack of interest by farmers is based on the fact that very few farmers request additional information on the TB status of animals they are considering buying. The auctioneers are
concerned that the introduction of a scheme will bring extra work for the markets, but will not be embraced by farmers.

3.1.2 Interviews with farmers at markets

The following summary of findings is presented according to whether farmers were buying or selling on the day but many stated they would both buy and sell cattle through the market throughout the year.

Attitudes to TB risk when buying cattle

High Risk Area: The vast majority of animals presented at this sale were from PTI1 herds. A key belief amongst buyers was that there was no advantage to them in sourcing animals from a PTI4 herd, because they believed wildlife to be the main source of TB infection in their herds, so an animal from a PTI4 herd would be just as likely to fail a TB test as an animal from a PTI1 herd. There was a view that if they were to purchase an animal that subsequently failed a TB test, it was most likely that the animal had contracted TB following movement to their herd. A generally held view was that a negative PrMT meant an animal wasn’t carrying TB.

As a general observation, it appeared that buyers were more interested in an animal’s BVD status than in the TB history of the herd of origin. However, some buyers did not appear to fully understand the information provided on BVD status.

Edge of Risk Area: Of the buyers interviewed, all were buying cattle to fatten. One buyer had bought cows and calves, but to feed and finish, not to enter a breeding herd. None were interested in being provided with more information on TB status, and none were interested in a RBTS. There appeared to be a view that pre-movement testing meant that animals were very unlikely to be carrying TB, so there was only a very small risk in buying animals from PTI1 herds. Buyers said that they were already struggling to be able to buy sufficient numbers of the type of cattle they required, so limiting this number further by only buying from LRA1s was not practical, nor did they think it would be of benefit to them. One interviewee who buys large numbers of cattle from several markets in the area felt that a voluntary scheme would have little effect on farmers’ trading practices at these markets. His view was that only increased regulation, such as an increased testing frequency for farmers in PTI4s buying from PTI1s, or making the farmer pay for testing tracers might influence trading patterns.

Low Risk Area: A key view amongst buyers was that the TB risk of the animals they purchased was important to them. This is clearly a key observation in the context of the establishment of a RBTS. Most interviewees said that they would not buy animals from a PTI1 or PTI2. The TB information provided at this market was felt to be valuable by all the interviewees. The distinction between animals moving from a PT4 that had always been on a PT4, as opposed to animals that were moving from a PT4, but that had not always been on a PT4 was considered very valuable. Some interviewees showed resentment of a seller at this market who regularly presents cattle sourced from the SW of England.

Attitudes to TB risk when selling cattle

High Risk Area: There appeared to be a high level of awareness of the risk of spreading disease by trading cattle amongst the sellers at this pedigree sale. However, there was also a view that the movement of cattle was not important in the spread of bTB. The view was expressed that cattle in the south west are tested for TB so often that it is very unlikely someone would sell an animal that was carrying TB. There appeared to be some frustration amongst those trying to sell, that the new regulations governing movement of animals into Scotland had reduced the opportunities for selling their stock. Some sellers said that they used to travel to the large bull sales in the North of England, but there was now no point in this, as there was no demand for animals from PTI1s or PTI2s, unless the animal was of
exceptional quality. Interviewees did not like the idea of declaring the date when a herd was last under TB restrictions, as they felt that this was unfair on farmers who have had TB. A widely held view was that TB in cattle is coming from wildlife or neighbouring herds, so TB is largely beyond the farmer’s control.

**Edge of Risk Area:** Of the sellers interviewed, one farmer was dispersing his herd of cows because he had previously been under TB restriction and the risk of this happening again, and the disruption it caused him, was a major factor in his decision to sell the herd. He said that he had not been asked by any potential purchasers about the TB history of his herd. He said he would have been very reluctant to have declared the TB history of his animals at the point of sale because he feared that this would have adversely affected the level of interest, and consequently the price for his cattle. He said that he thought requiring sellers to declare when they were last under TB restrictions would be very unpopular at this market.

Providing more information on health status generally was considered to be of value. However, the view was expressed that a clear PrMT was a guarantee for buyers that animals were free from TB. One seller said that he had had a reactor at a routine TB test several months ago. Upon receipt of the notification letter, he noted discrepancies which had left him feeling uncertain whether the animal was definitely infected with TB, so he would feel aggrieved at having to declare that his herd had been under restrictions for TB.

**Low Risk Area:** There was a widely held view that assessing disease risk was very important when trading cattle. Trading animals with neighbouring farmers, where there was a level of trust between neighbours was felt to be a safe way to trade.

The system at this market for declaring an animal’s TB history at point of sale was considered valuable. The general view was that the amount of information currently supplied was adequate.

**Attitudes to a risk based trading scheme**

**High Risk Area:** There was a general concern that if farmers were required to give information about when they were last under TB restrictions, this would stigmatise those who have recently had TB on their farms. Addressing this concern is a key challenge in the development of a RBTS.

A particular concern in declaring the last restriction date was in cases where farmers perceived that TB had not actually been confirmed. For example, when animals that have reacted to the skin test have no visible lesions (NVL) and are culture negative. In herds that have no history of TB, farmers feel that animals that are NVL and culture negative probably did not have TB, so they will be particularly unhappy to have to declare that they have been under restriction.

A key belief amongst interviewees in high risk areas is that there is little point in worrying about cattle movements in high risk areas when the risk of disease spreading from neighbouring herds or wildlife is constant.

Farmers in high risk areas appreciate that moving cattle from high risk to low risk areas may spread TB, but most perceive pre-movement testing to be an adequate safeguard.

**Edge of Risk Area:** As for the high risk area, there was concern that a scheme would stigmatise those who have been under TB restrictions. Most of the interviewees in the edge of risk area were trading cattle for finishing, and were not interested in a scheme.

**Low Risk Area:** In the low risk area, farmers appeared happy with the scheme run by the market. English farmers appreciated that providing TB information at the point of sale was vital to maintain trade with Scotland. Most farmers also seemed to value the scheme for making their own buying decisions.
Farmer views on how a risk based trading scheme might work

How would they like TB information to be provided?

All the farmers who expressed any interest in a scheme said that they would like information on TB status to be available at point of sale, either on the electronic screen, and/or read out by the auctioneer. Most also thought that including the information in a sale catalogue was useful. However, many felt there were limitations with catalogues as not all sales are catalogued, late entries won’t be included, and farmers often bring a different animal from the one(s) entered. All felt that information in the catalogue should be backed up by point of sale information.

None of the farmers felt that an on-line database for farmers was a good idea. The objections to an on-line database were: not wanting other farmers to be able to access information about their herds, not comfortable with accessing information electronically, lack of time to access information on the sale day if animals not pre-entered.

3.1.3 Veterinary surgeons views on the introduction of a risk-based trading scheme

High Risk Area

The vet in the high risk area had spent many years working in a TB hotspot area. His first hand experience of how TB affected the farming practices in his area had resulted in him having strong views on current TB control measures. He began by commenting on the frustration felt by many vets by the continual rise in incidence of TB and failure to tackle the wildlife reservoir. Whilst this issue per se is not within the remit of the current initiative, this widespread concern does need to be recognised in discussions with vets, an important group of key influencers on RBTS development.

Whilst he indicated his support for a RBTS, he had some concerns that farmers who have recently been under TB restrictions would not wish to disclose this information. He suggested that any form of RBTS was unlikely to work if it was voluntary. As a general point, he suggested that there should be a distinction between moving to live and movements for finishing (e.g. within 120 days).

He suggested that the best way to limit spread of TB into clean areas would be to make it mandatory for all animals moving to live from a PTI1 to a PTI4 to be isolated and post-movement tested twice. Whilst the veterinary case for doing this is probably justifiable, it is in contrast to the views of many of the farmers interviewed who expressed an unwillingness (or inability) to implement these measures.

He felt that vets were important in communicating the risk of TB spread arising from cattle movements and reported that for farm to farm sales, some farmers were already increasingly using their vet to assist them with trading decisions based on disease status. He felt that this practice had obvious merit (improved herd health, reduced risk of disease transmission) and should be encouraged.

If a scheme were to be introduced, he favoured an on-line database. This view was somewhat at odds with those of the farmers (see Sections 3.2.8, 3.3.3.and 3.3.6) and this may be a reflection of the greater use made of computers by vets in their day-to-day work compared to farmers. A further potential difficulty would be that a change in legislation regarding disclosure of information would be required if farmers were to access database information.

Low Risk Area

The vet working within the low risk area reported that TB was not a topic that was regularly discussed with her farmers. Only a few of her clients were members of herd health schemes,
although she did report that interest appears to be growing since Scotland started a BVD eradication programme. To what extent these views would be reflected by other vets within the low risk area is unclear.

She felt that most of her clients were aware of the risk of bringing in TB - the introduction of TB into the area following FMD restocking in 2001 had increased awareness amongst farmers of the risks of introducing disease to an area by the movement of cattle. She reported that most clients do now assess the risk of TB when making trading decisions and in most cases farmers sought to minimize the risk of introducing TB by not purchasing animals from PTI1 and PTI2 holdings.

She also favoured a database for providing TB information as an accessible and convenient vehicle for a RBTS. This again appears to contrast with the majority view of farmers interviewed who favoured information provided at point of sale via large screen and/or in the sale catalogue.

3.2 Focus groups

Within the focus groups farmers were initially encouraged to share their cattle buying and selling practices and decision processes in order to gain an understanding of the current situation and enable subsequent discussions over potential risk based trading systems to be placed in context.

The focus group respondents represented a wide cross section of the cattle farming industry covering high, edge of risk and low TB risk areas. Respondents represented a range of herd sizes and included a mix of beef and dairy farmers (see Appendix 4, Table 1); a mix of farmers buying and selling locally and further afield within the UK and overseas; buyers and sellers of sucklers (cows and calves), stores, bulls and pedigree cattle; and included several farmers who had suffered an incidence of TB.

Respondents in the high risk area were primarily on 1 yearly testing, those in edge of risk area mainly on 1 or 2 yearly intervals and those in low risk area primarily on 4 yearly testing. There were many similarities between views and opinions in the high and edge of risk areas, with the greatest differences between the lower risk and high/edge of risk areas. These similarities and differences are discussed below.

3.2.1 Awareness and understanding of Bovine TB

The farmers were very aware of the TB risk level and the associated testing interval within their area and had knowledge of different risk levels in other parts of the country. Although badgers and possibly other wildlife were understood to transfer TB to cattle there was some uncertainty how the transfer occurred between badgers and cattle and also cattle to cattle. This lack of knowledge and the speculation made as to possible transfer mechanisms (e.g. transmitted by cattle through breathing, contact with ground urinated on by badgers) may have added to reservations over reliance on testing intervals and the TB test per se.

“That’s another thing that we have no information on. If you went to (other SW livestock market) and bought an animal off a 1 and put it on your 4 you’d be a little bit worried until you’d had your test; was that beast going to pass the test, but after 6 months you think it’s going to be alright now. Does it live in the cow’s liver does it live in its gut, does that cow always carry it ….. or every time it breathes it puffs a bit of that disease out. We have no information.” (Low risk area)

Some criticism was made of Defra for not providing clear and consistent information about TB (transmission etc) and changes to testing interval regulations e.g. removal of the 30 days to sell cattle after purchase irrespective of the date of the previous pre-movement test.
3.2.2 Buying criteria

The farmers had numerous buying criteria. Choosing a healthy looking animal at the right price and right age to meet their farming needs was key e.g. appropriate age for breeding etc. Buying a disease-free animal was also high on the priority list. In order to achieve this, farmers were keen to buy from known vendors with whom they had a good trading history. Overall they placed more reliance on familiarity with the vendor and their farm than written documentation. Buying from market offered greater choice of animal and the advantage of perhaps being able to secure a more favourable price. A market sale was also beneficial for a pedigree animal as a herd health declaration including the TB PTI and test dates appeared to be available.

Trust and familiarity were key factors with farmers buying from people they knew had a clean herd and who they had previously bought from without problem (whether in relation to TB or other diseases). Animals sold at a market (even if TB free at the time of entry) could pose a greater risk as they may have come into contact with infected animals whilst at market.

“If you buy regularly from a farm you know they haven’t got so many bugs.” (High risk area)

“I prefer to buy them on his farm, walk around his stock, and pick one out. I just know where it’s come from, it hasn’t been through market, it hasn’t picked anything up along the way, diseases, whatever.” (Low risk area)

“With the pedigrees, if you sell through the pedigree market sales you do a herd health declaration whether you vaccinate against certain diseases, whether you have been accredited for other diseases, the TB status whether it’s one year or four year.” (High risk area)

Overall those from a high risk area expected and also accepted that all animals will have been pre-movement tested and considered this the norm. However if they received word that a certain farmer had had cases of TB, or there had been several recent cases of TB near a market, or they had purchased animals that later tested positive, then that farmer or market might be avoided.

“If you want to make a profit and sell it straight on (like a dealer) you need to know that TB is going to last through that time (i.e. TB test) otherwise as long as its TB’d you can buy it and its yours.” (High risk area)

“We are that used to it, and we get little bits of information when we hear people talking” e.g. if they have had TB, you’d perhaps be a little more reluctant to buy.” (High risk area)

One low risk area respondent who sold breeding heifers to Scotland stressed the importance now given to the traceability and full history of the animal which was considered almost as important as what the animal looks like.

A number of farmers in low, edge of risk and high risk areas indicated they bred their own replacements in order to reduce the risk of bringing TB or other diseases onto the farm. Others bought direct from other farms where possible. This was perhaps more appropriate for bulls and small numbers of replacement animals which were needed within a short timescale.

“When we were dairying we bought quite a lot of heifers and cows after Foot and Mouth that brought with it BVD which took us quite a number of years of vaccination to clear it. We decided then stick with what you’ve got and breed our own. Now we just tend to breed everything and just buy bulls.” (Low risk area)
“I still think trust plays a big part in it, because you mention about buying cattle from the same place, well you obviously trust that guy so you go back to that place..... We always ask their history, what they’ve had.” (Low risk area)

The low risk area respondents were aware of higher TB risk areas across the country and avoided buying cattle from there even when buying from market e.g. Cambridge and the South West.

“If we ever do buy replacements we buy at a local auction, local cattle..... in 2011 bought 5 heifers out of ...(low risk area market)... and they come from not too far away, were local.” (Low risk area)

One respondent in particular who bought in cattle from across the UK and traded with Scotland stressed the importance of knowing the animal movement history i.e. all areas where the animal had been moved from not just the last movement. He was aware that animals sold to Scotland had to be from 3 or 4 yearly testing interval parishes and currently there was no proof which holdings the animal had been on. A few farmers had experienced situations where they had been told animals had come from low TB risk areas which had been proven not to be true once they had seen the passport. A further example was cited in the low risk area of animals which went down with Johnes shortly after the sale, but the vendor denied they had had any problems. Thus trust in another farmer was not always sufficient.

“The passport that follows the animal at the moment is nothing but a bit of paper that’s a damned nuisance, it proves nothing and it says nothing. It says where it’s originated from but if I get a job to buy some cattle for somebody, especially if they are going to Scotland, they have got to be 3’s or 4’s. There is no way on the passport that you can trace where it’s been in its life, apart from the addresses. ...... This trusting people is out of the window.” (Low risk area)

“That’s true, I was going to buy some Scottish cows from a chap and they came from the Welsh border, and they were supposed to come from Scotland.” (Low risk area)

A respondent from the low risk area with responsibility for a large estate bought in bulls from Denmark due to the high health status of the animals and documented evidence on a veterinary database all vaccinations, disease etc. This database was known to have been in existence for 20 years. He acknowledged the cost of setting up such a system which would prove prohibitive for the UK.

“As I don’t buy cattle in from auction, I am able to do preparatory work when I do buy. So I can look into the health status of whatever I propose to buy, and I have to say the last few years we have only bought from Denmark which is high health status and the beauty about the system over there, is that because vets have to administer all the medicines basically, every single time a medicine is administered it’s held on a national database so there’s no skeletons in any corners, everything is known about for every herd, so you can drill in detail the problems they might have had in previous years. It is BVD free, Denmark, and they also give assurances for various other diseases but before I import I insist on having blood tests done to just to confirm they are free at the time. So they in effect go into quarantine when I buy them and then we import them.” (Low risk area)

3.2.3 Pre-movement testing

Farmers in the high risk areas felt that all cattle should be pre-movement tested irrespective of the parish (despite some reservations over the accuracy of the test). This feeling was particularly strong in the edge of risk area where a number of farmers in 2 year testing intervals were paying for their tests. This was seen as a fairer system and would be a better way of eradicating or controlling TB. This view was re-enforced by the belief that there is no guarantee that an animal from a 4 yr interval that did not require pre-movement testing,
would not have come into contact with infected animals in the past or would not be currently infected. Those in high risk areas who were testing annually or 6 monthly felt they were at a disadvantage in that it could be more difficult to sell animals to farms in lower risk areas. Also the cost of testing was an issue.

“This 3 or 4 yr testing is wrong to me. For those of us who are testing every year, we have to pre-movement test, if I want to sell something after 60 days I have to retest it. Someone can be on a farm with 4 year testing, and it can be three years since they have tested and they can sell me something saying they're TB free, but they could have had TB for 2 years. To me if we are pre-movement testing we should all pre-movement test.” (Edge of risk area)

Those in higher risk areas try to minimise the number of tests by only testing once a year - thus the annual test is also the pre-movement test.

The low risk area respondents were not in support of universal pre-movement testing because of the time, manpower and cost involved and also some reservations over the value of this testing given the animals could pick up TB after the test anyway. This view however somewhat contradicted the desire to see more regular testing across the country to help eradicate TB.

3.2.4 Post movement testing

The edge of risk and high risk area respondents felt strongly that post movement testing was not a sensible option for a number of reasons:

- Animals purchased would normally need to be put to use immediately - for example to join the breeding herd. For this reason, most farmers interviewed were of the opinion that they could not justify placing it in isolation

“If you’ve got to post movement test, it means if I bought in say 20 steers, I would have to keep these steers in their own paddock, then bring them in, then have them tested, then put them back out, then have them back in again, you wouldn’t want to buy in!”

- A suitable place for isolation would need to be found
- If positive the buyer’s farm would be placed under restriction rather than the seller’s farm
- The buyer did not want to incur the cost of the vet call out fee and tests
- Post movement testing is like “shutting the door after the horse has bolted”

“So if someone’s got trouble he keeps the trouble on his own farm, he don’t pass it over to you.” (High risk area)

It was strongly felt that the onus should be on the seller to carry out the testing.

The low risk area respondents felt post-movement testing may be useful if buying from risky areas.

3.2.5 Price differences between high and low risk areas

The respondents in the edge of risk area and high risk area respondents were not aware of any price premium for cattle from low risk areas, with the possible exception of pedigree bulls. The edge of risk area farmers were strongly against the idea of premium prices for cattle from low-risk areas particularly given the additional expense for them to carry out annual and/or pre-movement tests

“I don't think the price is different, but I think we are at a disadvantage as it’s cost us £15 a head to test them.” (Edge of risk area)

“They (top breeders) won’t pay the money for good bulls from 1 and 2 year testing as they would for 3 and 4 yr testing.” (Pedigree buyer – high risk area)
Some of the low risk area farmers felt animals from a 1 or 2 year PTI may command a lower price at market although views over the level of reduction varied (e.g. 20% or more). However this was likely to be for breeding animals rather than stores. Scottish buyers were considered more likely to pay a premium for animals form 4 yearly testing intervals than English buyers; however the number of cattle from 1 or 2 year parishes sold in the area was lower now than in previous years. There was a suggestion that buyers avoided animals from 1 and 2 year testing intervals due to a need to retest after 60 days.

3.2.6 Overall interest in a risk based trading system

Overall the farmers in the high and edge of risk areas had no strong desire to alter the current system of information provision, particularly as they know animals over 42 days need to be pre-movement tested within 60 days and cattle at the local markets are likely to be from 1 or 2 yearly testing intervals. There was thought likely to be greater value however if buying in from different areas of the country. Additional information on TB history could be gained from the vendor informally.

Greater interest was shown in the low risk area amongst those in low risk areas who were buying regularly, with the key information being knowledge of the PTI for all holdings the animal had been on.

3.2.7 Type of information required

Date of last herd TB test

Currently farmers entered the pre-movement TB test date on the market entry form. Of the three markets in the vicinity of the focus groups, those within the edge of risk and the high risk areas appeared not to routinely asking for proof of testing by way of the vet’s certificate. Examples were provided of other markets which did require sight of the certificate. The low risk area market however was believed by the respondents to request the certificate for farms on 1 or 2 yearly testing intervals.

In the main, farmers trusted other farmers who declared that the pre-movement testing had been carried out. It was believed that records of the testing were recorded officially (e.g. by Defra) and thus anyone not being truthful about the testing could be identified. There were assumptions by some farmers that the testing dates were held on the BCMS database. In fact, one farmer cited an incidence where he was informed that animals he had bought had not been pre-movement tested, although he could not recall the source of this information. A suggestion made in the edge of risk focus group was that the market may have access to this information and could thus stop a sale if animals were found not to have been tested.

Farmers did not consider providing a vet’s certificate to prove when the test had been carried out to be a major priority, although they could see that perhaps, on reflection and after prompting, this would be the “right thing to do” to be sure the animals had been pre-movement tested.

“I think you should at least have something from the vets as proof; it’s pretty poor to just tick a box.” (High risk area)

It was felt that the onus of checking if the animals had been tested should be with the market.

“Maybe the market should have that information. They are dealing with the ear tag before we ever get them. When it’s on their database it should flag up to them and they should stop the sale.” (Edge of risk area)
Minority interest was expressed at having the PTI displayed in a sales catalogue at the high risk area market given past problems with incorrect information appearing on the screen at the auction or the screen not working.

Knowing the date of the last test was particularly important amongst buyers in high risk areas where pre-movement testing had been carried out. The date of the test was essential to buyers who may wish to sell the cattle on within the 60 day window. Sellers had no problem sharing this information.

There was some discussion and perhaps confusion in the high risk area market over the potential difference between an animal's test date and a herd test date which may vary - particularly in a one or two year testing parish.

The farmers' vet rather than the AHVLA were far more commonly referred to in relation to documentation to show the testing had been carried out. The vet's certificate (produced by the individual carrying out the test) was seen as the 'standard' for providing evidence of testing.

Routine herd testing interval

Farmers in the edge of risk area did not seem to currently provide the PTI when selling, whereas those in the high risk area were more likely to do so despite the fact that this information was not generally thought to be shared with the potential buyers. A case was however cited of a 3 year testing interval being publicised on the screen at the auction.

Not having this information was, in the main, not an issue in edge of risk and high risk areas as all local farmers would be from yearly or 2 yearly testing intervals and would be required to carry out pre-movement testing. They saw this as the norm and expected it to happen. Animals at the market were also very likely to be from the same testing interval and thus “everyone was in the same boat”. Reservations over the appropriateness of 4 yearly testing also reduced the desire to see this information provided as standard. Having said this, sellers had no problem providing or sharing this information if required.

The situation was, however, different when buying and selling pedigree animals where specialist pedigree sales produced catalogues which included the testing interval. This was considered to be important information particularly as trading was more likely to be further afield. Traders from low risk areas had been known to avoid cattle from high risk areas.

“Farms up north tend to try and stay away from the 1 and 2 year testing.” (High risk area)

Farmers selling at the low risk area market only needed to provide evidence via the vet's test certificate of the PTI if they were on a 1 or 2 year testing interval. It was thought possible for the auctioneer to check the PTI quite easily if necessary; thus, no further proof was required for the 3 or 4 year testing intervals.

Low risk area respondents buying from market felt they had limited information, restricted to the testing interval shown on a screen at the market. The testing interval for the last movement was judged to be important but not sufficient. The PTI for all movements was of greater interest generally and essential to a few respondents.

“Just a little number which comes up at the auction mart which says if it’s off a four, but it could be off a 1 this week and off a 4 next.” (Low risk area)

Movement history between different parish testing intervals

Interest in a system that was able to show that an animal had only ever been on farms with a 4 yearly testing interval was mixed. Those in a high risk area often felt it was not really relevant to them as they were already used to buying from higher risk areas and in fact cattle
at local markets were more than likely to be from these areas. In addition, there were reservations over the 4 yearly testing and whether this actually reduced or increased TB risk. This issue was a particular concern in the edge of risk area where nearby farms could be on 4 yearly and 1-2 yearly testing intervals. Respondents suggested they would have more confidence in the testing interval if they were buying in from a country free of TB.

There was a very high level of interest in the full PTI and movement history amongst some low risk area farmers who bought in from all over the UK and then sold these cattle on, sometimes to Scotland. Experience had shown they could not always trust the vendor’s information and required proof of past movements either through the passport or a central database (showing the PTI for each holding) with a simple system for displaying this information on a screen at the auction.

“We need a box up at the auction mart, with stars, for a 1, a 2, a 3 or a 4 lighting up. if it’s been on them or not.” (Low risk area)

“You need something on that passport to say if they have ever been in ones, twos, threes, or four’s so we have an easy way of doing it.” (Low risk area)

“I should imagine that at the auction if they put that tag number in, there is a database that they should be able to link to, a computer system somewhere.” (Low risk area)

Not all respondents were in agreement as they felt the volume of information to be collated and displayed at the auction would make it impractical.

There did not seem to be any awareness of the current system at the low risk area market as described by the auctioneers during the personal interviews, where a 4S shown on the screen would indicate that animals had always been on a 4 yearly testing holding. However on prompting, this type of system for simply communicating the past PTI history was well received.

Despite interest in the full PTI history in the low risk area there were still some reservations over the ability to fully rely on the 4 yearly testing interval.

Providing information on whether an animal had been in a herd with animals from a 1-2 year testing area seemed to be going a little too far even for the low risk area respondents and could make information provision confusing or over complicated and could severely restrict buying opportunities. Some buyers felt that it may be simpler not to be made aware of this information. Restrictions on the number of movements were suggested to reduce the chance of contracting TB.

“I would have thought that of those people who buy store cattle in, there would be very few farms that haven’t come in contact with cattle from a PTI once or twice during their life sometime. You really would restrict your market for buying in.” (Low risk area)

**Current herd TB status or date of last TB restriction**

This information was said to be of importance to the farmers, particularly for breeding cattle or dairy animals that would be kept longer term or for older stock where the TB risk could be higher. There was however no interest in either the high or edge of risk areas (primarily as from a sellers’ point of view) in it being documented prior to the sale as providing it may have a negative impact on sales if they had been under restriction in the past.

In addition, farmers considered any positive TB test history to be personal information and were keen to avoid sharing this with other local farmers irrespective of whether they were potential buyers or not. Concern over sharing past TB history was an issue for farmers on holdings where there had been confirmed TB cases and also holdings with unconfirmed TB. Thus farmers did not want to be penalised for false or inconclusive test results.
“We’ve got to talk from a seller’s point of view and I don’t think it’s a good idea at all, I’m happy to provide the date of the last test but I wouldn’t want to provide my TB status…. I don’t want them to know how many times I’ve had TB in the last 10 years.” (High risk area)

Talking to the vendors was considered a more appropriate way of collating this information. Respondents believed it possible that some sellers may steer clear of markets who openly displayed the TB history of a farm. Respondents acknowledged that this could be a particularly sensitive issue in the high risk areas where most farms in the area would have had (or are likely to have had) reactors.

“Trouble is if they are devaluing things people aren’t going to take them to the market.” (Edge of risk area)

The sales catalogues for pedigree sales enabled farmers to state if they had not had any incidences of TB, which was considered to be of value to the buyers.

“With the pedigrees they put on …. whether it’s an annual test or whatever and also state if you haven’t had a case on your farm or hadn’t had a case in so many years.” (High risk area)

Interest was shown in the low risk area for information on a TB restriction, but it had to be made available prior to the sale or during the sale. The farmers were aware of the potential detrimental effect on sales and loss of personal pride but felt it was important in reducing incidences of TB. Farmers interested in making this information available were from 4 year testing intervals having ‘less to lose’ than counterparts in higher risk areas.

“They should be made to say, if you’ve got a problem, it should be out in the open.” (Low risk area)

“That information should be in the public domain. There was an incident not far from us, we were outside its parish but we had a couple of fields only 2 fields away from the infected farm and actually trying to find information about how many of those animals had been infected, what the result of that last test was, it was impossible to find out, not even from the vet treating that herd…..” (Low risk area)

Reservations were voiced that no matter what precautions were taken by the buyer, it only takes a neighbour to buy in cattle from a high risk area to pass TB on to the farm.

3.2.8 Methods of communicating information

Cattle passport

The cattle passport was mentioned spontaneously at the edge of risk area (by 1 respondent who had suffered a TB restriction) and also at the low risk area. The edge of risk area respondent felt a sticker, which would be supplied with ear tag numbers on, by the vet could be added to the passport by the farmer to show the last TB test date. The sticker system was thought to be beneficial as it would provide proof of the test, and could show a history of testing which would be more beneficial than the vet’s letter which only showed the last test date. The market could then ensure the animal had a sticker in its passport before being accepted for sale. This suggestion generated some mild interest from other respondents.

“You know you have to stick a bar code on anyway, just a sticker that says this animal was tested or pre-movement tested or whatever on such a date.” (Edge of risk area)

Farmers in the high risk area showed little interest in the cattle passport as a means of recording TB data. The key issue was that the passport would not be seen until after the purchase, and in addition the farmers were keen to avoid further paperwork.

In the low risk area a few respondents felt the passport would be a potential way of recording movement history and showing the PTI of each or at least the last 5 holdings. However the
issue of not being able to see the passport prior to purchase meant that this information would need to be used by the auctioneer and presented to the farmer via a screen at the market to enable the farmer to take it into account when buying. The PTI could be entered on registration via BCMS and then subsequently by the farmer as a sticker each time the animal moves on.

“You’ve got each movement and the name and address of the owner - that name and address should carry 1, 2, 3 and 4 as to the parish where it was recorded.” (Low risk area)

Sale Catalogue

The availability of sales catalogues varied by market. None of the markets visited normally provided catalogues except for specialist sales e.g. sales for breeding animals at the edge of risk area market and possibly suckler sales at the high risk market. Thus the majority of farmers did not currently use a catalogue.

With the exception of specialist breeding sales, edge of risk area respondents showed little interest in information on TB being provided in a sales catalogue given that these were not usually available and that the inclusion of a 4 year testing interval still didn’t provide enough reassurance that the animal didn’t have TB. Even where a catalogue was available for the specialist breeding sale, a knowledge of the farmer or trader that was selling the cattle was still a key criterion.

Some interest in a sales catalogue was shown in the high risk area. This was from a number of farmers attending the market in question and also from an individual pedigree buyer who currently makes use of a catalogue already produced at another West Country market. The catalogue was seen as a means of allowing the farmer a chance to identify potential cattle to buy in his own time, particularly as information on the screen was not always visible for long enough. Voluntary inclusion of this information was required to “protect” farmers less keen to share their TB status. The catalogue was seen as most appropriate for bulls, dairy animals and sucklers, with the provision of such information for stores and calves being seen as less important.

“If you’ve got a catalogue it makes it a lot easier, you can have it in front of you and look at it…. If you were buying in anything like that you could say ‘look at that they’ve never had TB in say the last 3 years’ ‘‘I'll go an extra few quid on that.” (High risk area)

“It’s brilliant…. You can see who the breeder is so you know that I’ve had some from him and they were absolutely useless I won’t buy from him or they’ve really done well - I'll buy them you can see who bred them and the TB date (first testing date).” (High risk area)

Concern was expressed however over the ability to pre-movement test, obtain the certification and enter the cattle in the catalogue in time. In addition as most vendors tended to be from similar TB testing intervals the value in entering the information in the sales catalogue was felt by some to be limited.

“I've got some cattle now I'm pre-movement testing this week, I tested them this morning will get a reading Friday and I want to sell them on Saturday, so I'm not going to get them into the catalogue Saturday, but that's always going to happen, but I do think the catalogue is a good idea definitely.” (High risk area)

A catalogue also provided the opportunity for the seller to provide information on vaccinations e.g. against BVD or accredited free of Johnes, which would be of value to the buyers. In fact one buyer felt that had this document been available to him, he may have avoided buying in an animal with BVD.

TB status document
There was little interest in separate documentation for only TB related information. This created additional paperwork and was likely to only been seen by the farmer after the sale.

“That’s more paperwork then, so we’d have to have an attachment to every passport saying the TB status of every farm it’s been on.” (High risk area)

“If you go to xxxxxxxx and see a bunch of store cattle going in to the ring, you can’t say stop the sale I want to see the TB thing.” (High risk area)

The farmers felt the auctioneers may not be keen to provide this information during the sale given that it could slow down the process and potentially put off potential buyers if the farm had had an incidence of TB.

Separate herd health status document

A separate herd status document was not well received for general dairy, store or suckler cattle. Examples were, however, cited of this type of information already being available when buying in a bull. It was thought impractical, overly complicated and too costly to record health information e.g. Johnes, BVD and TB for the whole herd, particularly as this was likely to involve the vet carrying out several different tests. It would also be too time consuming if the farmer needed to complete it, and there was a strong desire to avoid additional paperwork of any kind.

“If you think you’ve got to do that for every animal, it’s going to cost a fortune” (i.e. record health status of whole herd,) a vet won’t fill it in for nothing, we have to do farm assurance every 18 month in any case.” (Edge of risk area)

“You don’t want all this paperwork you want something simple to tell you it’s a clear healthy animal to buy. Them bits of paper you only get after you’ve bought it.” (Low risk area)

Food Chain Information (FCI)

The FCI was only considered an appropriate document for animals sold to slaughter and thus would not be relevant to a risk based trading system for live animals.

On-line database

A key reservation over an on-line database for use by farmers was that this information would only be accessible once you knew the animals’ ear tag numbers. Thus it could not be used prior to a visit to the market (unless a sales catalogue contained this information). There was thought little time or opportunity to access on line information during a sale. Given the number of animals for sale at any regular sale, looking up information would be time consuming and even a waste of time as it would be necessary to do so for many animals from different vendors, as it was impossible to tell prior to the sale what price the animals would go for and whether they would live up to expectations on visual inspection. Reservations were also expressed over sharing too much information on each animal with other farmers. In addition some concern was raised over a database being too complicated for the farmers to access and use themselves, and would rely on the farmer having internet access and confidence in using the technology.

“You don’t want people to know you’ve got x amount this and x amount that that’s your own business.” (High risk area)

“You can’t go round looking at the ear tags of everyone you think you might want to buy.” (Edge of risk area)

“If you see some cattle at the auction you …… wouldn’t know the ear tag numbers to look for those specific ones.” (Low risk area)
A database which could be accessed and used by the auctioneers would be more practical however there were still concerns over who would upload all the additional TB related information and who would pay for this to be done.

Although little interest was shown, the value would potentially be greater for sucklers than store cattle. Information could be held on whether a suckler had been inconclusive reactor (IR) at any time.

**Verbally from the vendor**

It was clear that the farmers were already regularly obtaining and sharing information verbally with other farmers when buying and selling and were happy to continue to do so, although it did appear easier to do so at pedigree sales where the seller would stand with his animals. The key information obtained during these exchanges was the TB history of the farm i.e. whether they had had any breakdowns and how long ago this was. The farmers were not keen to have this information made widely available if they had previously had incidences of TB on their farm but would share the information if asked directly by another farmer. Farmers without any previous cases of TB were keen to share this information with potential buyers, but appeared happy to do so verbally, particularly as they were fully aware that at any point in the future they could have a case of TB and would then be reticent to make the information public.

“You do see vendors that stand up behind their stock ……. I always think that’s a good sign if you’ve got somebody stood there behind their stock as they’re showing their face to you.”

(High risk area)

“When selling at market people do come up to you and ask if you have had a breakdown.”

(Edge of risk area)

**Screen at the market**

Information on the last TB test date and sometimes the PTI is currently made available (together with age and breed) on a screen at the markets for many (but not all) sales. This was particularly the case for stores but not necessarily calves. Thus it was generally seen as a familiar and acceptable source of information.

3.2.9 **Voluntary or mandatory provision of information**

Overall the edge of risk respondents saw little value in making further information provision with regard to TB mandatory. Collecting information from the seller verbally was acceptable. Providing information voluntarily (within the sales catalogue) was the generally preferred view at the high risk area market. Low risk area farmers were more sceptical and felt a mandatory system was needed, as it would only take one false declaration and TB could be introduced into the area or on to the farm. This is probably simply a reflection of respondents in low risk areas feeling they having ‘more to lose’ than those in higher risk areas - a theme that was widely reflected throughout all the farmer discussions.

3.2.10 **Other schemes**

Farmers in the edge of risk area were aware of past testing for Brucellosis, with farms gaining accredited herd status if they were free from it. The idea of accreditation for TB was discussed but rejected given the impact it would have on farmers who suffered a TB outbreak i.e. they would lose their TB-free status and may have more difficulty selling their animals. However, accreditation for being Brucellosis free was felt to be more appropriate and trustworthy given that it could only be passed between cattle.

One respondent in the high risk area was aware of stricter restrictions in Wales. When prompted about the use of a ‘sticker’ system for the cattle passport there were concerns over
the time taken for the stickers to arrive and additional work needed to add them to the passport.

3.3 Survey of cattle farmers

In total, interviews were completed with 203 farmers. Respondents reported a range of cattle enterprises and these are summarised below by herd type.

Of the 203 farmers interviewed, 120 (59%) had a suckler herd, 70 (35%) had a grower/finisher unit, 66 (33%) were involved with calf rearing, 57 (28%) reared heifers, 49 (24%) had a dairy herd and 4 (2%) were classed as ‘other’ e.g. exempt finishing unit etc.

A table showing the detailed breakdown of cattle enterprises by TB risk area, herd type and herd size (based on the AHVL A record of cattle numbers in January 2012) is provided in the Annex (Appendix 4, Table 2).

The range of cattle enterprises reported was broadly similar across the different TB risk areas with the exception of grower/finisher units that tended to be reported more often in high TB risk areas. As expected, suckler herds and grower/finisher units were more commonly reported by respondents classed as having ‘beef’ herds whilst dairy herds, calf rearing and heifer rearing were more commonly associated with the ‘dairy’ herds.

Overall the majority of respondents (84%) stated that all their cattle were kept on one holding. The proportion tended to be higher in the low TB risk areas (89%) compared with high risk areas (78%) and in small and medium sized herds (average 91%) compared with large herds (65%). Where respondents reported more than one holding (n=33) 39% stated that they were in different TB risk areas.

3.3.1 Trading patterns for those bringing in cattle

Overall 141 respondents (70%) reported that they had brought cattle onto their holding(s) in the previous 12 month period. Movements onto the holding(s) were unaffected by herd type or TB risk area but there was a trend for larger herds to be more likely to have brought cattle in (76%) compared with small herds (63%).

Respondents were asked about the type of cattle they had brought onto their holdings (see Annex – Appendix 4, Table 3). Respondents in high TB risk areas were significantly more likely (p<0.05) to have brought in cattle for finishing than those in low TB risk areas and significantly less likely (p<0.05) to have brought in cattle for further rearing (i.e. to be sold as stores or for breeding rather than to slaughter). Beef herds were significantly (p<0.05) more likely to have brought in cattle intended for finishing than dairy herds.

Overall the majority of respondents (65%) had brought cattle onto their holdings on one to five occasions (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 4). Those in low TB risk areas and with small herds reported bringing cattle in on fewer occasions than those in high TB risk areas or with medium/large herds. Respondents with beef herds were more likely to report bringing in cattle on more than 10 occasions. This is reflected in the type of animals brought in with animals to enter the breeding herd more likely to be brought in on 1-5 occasions whilst those intended for finishing were more likely to be brought in on six or more occasions.

Markets were the most frequently mentioned source of cattle (55%) followed by direct movements from another farm (45%). Dealers or buying groups were only used by 8% of respondents and 5% reported other sources including, imports from other European countries or the return of their own stock from a rearing site. More detailed information on sources of cattle brought onto holding(s) by TB risk area, herd type and herd size is given in Appendix 4, Table 5 of the annex.
The source of stock varied according to the intended use of the animals (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 6). Animals intended for finishing were significantly more likely to be sourced from livestock markets or dealers/buying groups than direct from other farmers.

3.3.2 Factors considered when bringing in cattle

Respondents that had brought cattle onto their holding(s) in the previous 12 months were asked how much consideration they gave to a number of factors when selecting animals. The mean scores for each of these factors (on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being ‘not at all’ and 4 being ‘a great deal’) are summarised in the Annex – Appendix 4, Table 7. The quality of animals was ranked highest (3.60) by respondents irrespective of TB risk area, herd type or herd size. Overall, the risk of bringing in TB was ranked third (3.11) but for farmers in low TB risk areas it was considered to be significantly (p<0.05) more important and was ranked as the second most important factor (3.35) compared with 4th choice for those in high TB risk areas (2.88).

3.3.3 Assessing and managing the TB risk of cattle brought on to holdings

The majority of respondents felt that they were provided with sufficient information to adequately assess both the general health status (78%) and specifically the TB status (77%) of animals they were bringing in. However differences between TB risk areas were observed with respondents from low TB risk areas more likely to consider they had sufficient information to assess TB status of cattle (87%) than those in high TB risk areas (68%). Overall 16% of respondents (22% in high TB risk areas) considered that they were not provided with sufficient information to assess the TB status of animals they were bringing in and a small number (n=10, 7%) stated that they did not consider the TB risk. Seven of these were in a high risk area and three a low risk area. Respondents that moved cattle direct from another farmer were more likely to state that they had received sufficient information (84%) than those that had sourced cattle through a dealer or buying group (55%). Of those that sourced cattle through markets 72% considered that they had received sufficient information to assess the TB risk.

Respondents were asked what they currently do to minimise the risk of spreading TB to their herd by bringing in animals from a high risk area (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 8). Differences were seen between respondents from low and high TB risk areas. Of the 141 responses recorded 73% of farmers said they do not bring cattle in from high risk areas - the vast majority of these respondents (90%) farming in low TB risk areas compared with 57% in high TB risk areas. Of the 21% of respondents that indicated they currently check that animals had been pre-movement tested, a significant majority farmed in high risk areas. Only 8% said they currently isolate and post movement test with a further 7% saying they implement ‘other measures’. These other measures included trusting in the market to check necessary tests had been completed, avoiding older cattle and isolating cattle brought in for a period of time (without subsequent post-movement testing). Only 1% of respondents reported that they did nothing.

Respondents were asked about the potential usefulness of a range of information that could be provided to assist with assessing the TB status of cattle brought onto their holdings (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 9). These responses were graded on a scale of 1 – 4 where 1 was ‘not at all’ and 4 was ‘very useful’. Overall, all sources were considered to be useful but the current herd TB status (score 3.22) and the date of last TB restriction (3.06) were scored most highly. In all cases respondents from low TB risk areas tended to score the information more highly than those in high TB risk areas (3.42 c.f. 2.77). Respondents with dairy herds also tended to score all sources of information higher than those with beef herds (3.66 c.f. 2.96). Information relating to animals moving from herds in a 4 year PTI was considered particularly useful by respondents in low risk areas or with dairy herds (3.79 and 3.42 respectively). Within this area of questioning, respondents were also asked whether there was any other information that would help them assess the level of TB risk of cattle they
bring in. A number suggested that they relied on trading with known contacts which meant they had a good knowledge of the health and TB status of the herd and the immediate area (n=9) whilst others felt they would like better information on where TB was in an area (n=5).

Respondents were questioned about the credibility of TB status information and the responses were graded in a similar way to before with a score of 1 being ‘not at all credible’ to 4 being ‘fully credible’. Across all respondents, certification from the (private practice) vet was deemed to be marginally more credible than an official AHVLA letter (3.3 c.f. 3.23) and both were rated as being more credible than self certification by the farmer (2.54). This pattern was consistent across all respondents, irrespective of TB risk area, herd type or herd size (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 10).

Respondents were asked to rate the usefulness (scale 1 to 4) of a range of methods that could be used to report TB status (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 11). The sale catalogue and auctioneer at the point of sale scored most highly overall (3.00 and 2.96 respectively) and this trend was consistent across TB risk area, herd type and herd size. The cattle passport scored third overall (2.65) with those in low TB risk areas scoring it more highly than those in high TB risk areas (3.04 c.f. 2.28). Several respondents commented that the cattle passport was of limited use as it wasn’t seen until after purchase. Overall, the provision of a separate TB status document or an online database was considered least useful (2.48 and 2.42 respectively), although dairy herds and large herds tended to view these options slightly more favourably. This might suggest that RBTS information should be targeted differently for the different sectors – i.e. rather than the ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Respondents were asked whether there were any other channels that they would like to receive the information through. There were single mentions of Defra or a ‘phone line’, but where a comment was made this most often suggested that what was needed was a simple integrated system that did not create a lot of paperwork.

3.3.4 Perceived usefulness of a voluntary scheme for farmers bringing cattle onto holdings

Respondents who had brought cattle onto their holding(s) in the previous 12 months were asked whether a voluntary scheme in which sellers declared their herd’s TB status in a standardised format would be valuable to them. Overall 53% of respondents stated they would find a scheme valuable, 28% would not and 18% were not sure. Those in a low TB risk area tended to be more likely to state they would find a scheme valuable (59%) than those in a high TB risk area (47%). Herd size and herd type did not appear to affect the likelihood of a scheme being considered valuable to respondents.

The influence of other factors that might affect respondents’ views on a voluntary scheme were explored including age group, TB restriction history and membership of other schemes (e.g. farm assurance schemes). Age of respondent affected the view of a voluntary scheme with those in the 56-65 and 65+ age groups significantly less likely (average 42%) to consider it valuable than those in the 46-55 age group (67%). Respondents whose herds had been under TB restrictions in the previous two years were also significantly less likely to consider the scheme valuable (6 out of 21, 29%) than those that had not experienced restrictions (69 out of 119, 58%).

Membership of other schemes also affected respondents’ views on the value of a voluntary scheme with those that were members of a cattle health scheme or breed society more likely (69% and 65% respectively) to view a voluntary scheme as something they would find of value than those that were not members of any scheme (42%) (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 12).
3.3.5 Trading patterns for those moving cattle off holdings

Overall 155 respondents (76%) reported that they had moved cattle off their holding(s) (other than to slaughter) in the previous 12 month period. Movements off holding(s) were unaffected by herd size or TB risk area but there was a tendency (0.05<p<0.1) for dairy type herds to be more likely to have moved cattle than beef herds (85% vs. 73%).

Respondents were asked about the type of cattle they had moved off their holdings (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 13). Beef herds were significantly (p<0.05) more likely to have moved cattle intended for finishing than dairy herds (63% c.f. 47%) whilst dairy herds reported significantly more animals being moved off intended for further rearing (35% c.f. 16%).

Overall, the majority of respondents (63%) had moved cattle off their holdings on one to five occasions (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 14). Those with small herds moved cattle on significantly fewer occasions than medium or large herds (90% reported moving cattle off on 1 -5 occasions c.f. 48% for medium-sized herds and 52% for large herds). Respondents with beef herds were also more likely to report moving cattle off on 1 -5 occasions than dairy herds (72% c.f. 45%)

Markets were the most common sale route for cattle (72%) followed by movements direct to another farm (36%). Dealers or buying groups were used by 4% of respondents (particularly by large and dairy herds) and 5% reported other routes including, movements to shows, isolation/finishing units or movements to temporary grazing. A table showing the detailed breakdown by TB risk area, herd type and herd size is provided in the Annex (Appendix 4, Table 15).

3.3.6 Current level of information provided for cattle when moved

Respondents were asked about the information they provided when moving cattle off their holdings (Annex – Appendix 4, Table 16). Overall, they were most likely to provide information on pre-movement testing (60%), herd TB status (56%) and whether the cattle were home-bred (56%). With the exception of information relating to TB, the information provided was common across the herd TB risk areas, herd type and herd size. Those in high TB risk areas were significantly more likely to provide information on herd TB status (65% c.f. 47%) and pre-movement tests (88% c.f. 32%) than those in low risk areas. It should be remembered, however, that pre-movement tests are not required in low risk areas and so very few would have this information to share. Information relating to other disease status, vaccination or other details was less frequently given. A small number stated that they did not provide any information (7%). Where respondents had provided other information this was most likely to be information on pedigree/breeding (n=9), general husbandry (such as calving dates, castration etc.) and worming (n=11) or farm assurance details (n=7).

Respondents were asked how useful they thought a range of channels would be for providing information to buyers about TB status and the responses are summarised in Annex – Appendix 4, Table 17. The mean scores (on a 1 – 4 scoring system) reported are in close agreement with the scores given by farmers bringing cattle onto their holdings (and in many cases respondents may be both buyers and sellers). The auctioneer and the sale catalogue were considered the most useful channels to provide information (2.93 and 2.91 respectively) whilst a separate TB document or online system was considered least useful (2.40 and 2.37 respectively).

Respondents were asked how willing they would be to provide information on their herd’s TB status through self certification, an official AHVLA letter or veterinary certification. The vast majority (86%) stated they would be willing to provide information through self certification. Overall, 74% would be willing to provide a veterinary certificate and 69% an official AHVLA letter. In the last two cases, respondents in high TB risk areas were significantly more willing
to provide information than those in low risk areas. This may reflect the fact that animals moving from herds in high risk areas will have been pre-movement tested, and the farmer provided with a copy of the Tuberculin Test Certificate to verify this. In low risk areas, animals are not required to be pre-movement tested and hence farmers would need to actively seek additional certification. Respondents who were willing to provide vet/AHVL A information were, however, cautious (irrespective of risk area) about additional costs and paperwork associated with these.

Where respondents had stated that they were not willing to provide information through the above routes the reasons given included the following:

- Trade may be adversely affected
- Additional paperwork and/or costs
- Existing system is adequate
- Self certified information may not be trustworthy

### 3.3.7 Willingness of sellers to participate in a voluntary scheme

Overall 65% of respondents that had moved cattle off their holdings in the previous 12 months (n=100 out of 155) indicated that they would be willing to participate in a voluntary scheme in which sellers would declare their TB status in a standardised format. Although there was slightly more interest amongst those from high TB risk areas differences were not significant. A fifth of respondents (20%) stated that they would not be willing to participate and the remaining 16% were unsure.

Many of the respondents provided additional comments to qualify their response and these can be broadly classified as below:

**Willing to participate (n=39 that commented out of 100)**

- Happy to participate as have nothing to hide (n=5)
- Already doing this (n=3)
- Sharing information will be helpful in tackling the TB problem (n=21)
- Some concerns over how effective a voluntary scheme will be if there isn't sufficient uptake (n=4)
- Some concerns about additional paperwork or costs with a scheme (n=2)
- Possible negative impact on trade (n=1)

**Unwilling to take part (n=28 that commented out of 31)**

- We already provide enough information/already doing this (n=8)
- Don’t want additional paperwork, complications or costs (n=8)
- Cannot see the point, should be focussing on the cause of the problem (n=4)
- Information may not be trustworthy (n=1)
- Negative impact on trade (n=3)
- The information is private (n=1)

**Not sure (n=16, that commented out of 24)**

- We already provide enough information/already doing this (n=1)
- Don’t want additional paperwork, complications or costs (n=4)
- Not convinced of the value/relevance (n=3)
- Information may not be trustworthy (n=1)
- Concerns over how effective a voluntary scheme will be (n=2)
- Would need more detail before deciding (n=3)
3.3.8 Views on additional measures that might reduce the likelihood of spreading TB through cattle movements

All respondents were asked their opinion on the likely impact on trade of two measures that might reduce the likelihood of spreading TB through cattle movements. The first outlined a requirement to isolate and post-movement test cattle moved from a high to low TB risk area and the second more frequent testing for herds in low risk areas that bring in cattle from high risk areas. The responses are summarised in the Annex (Appendix 4, Table 18). The pattern of responses to both additional measures was similar. 67% of all respondents felt that the additional measures would have a neutral or positive effect on trade, with 22% believing the measures would have a negative impact. The latter view was more prevalent (although not significantly so) with respondents within high risk areas (overall average of 27% in high risk areas c.f. 18% in low risk). The remaining 11% declared themselves as ‘don’t knows’. Difficulties associated with providing suitable isolation facilities were raised by a number of respondents in relation to isolation and post-movement testing (n=18).

3.3.9 Views on price variability between differing TB risk areas

Respondents were asked how, if at all, they thought the price varies for cattle from different TB risk areas. Around a quarter (23%) thought that cattle from low TB risk areas usually attract a higher price than those from high risk areas whilst 30% felt there was usually no price difference. Respondents from high TB risk areas were significantly more likely to think there was no price difference.

Where respondents thought there was a price premium for cattle from low risk areas (23%, n=46 out of 203), a fifth (n=9) thought the premium would be 1-5%, a third (n=15) thought it would be 6-10% and 17% (n=8) thought it would be more than 10%.

3.3.10 Additional comments

At the end of the telephone interview respondents were asked whether they had any further comments. Around half (n=102) chose to make comments and where relevant these are summarised below under common themes. The % figures quoted are based on the number that chose to provide additional comments (102).

- The most frequently raised subject related to dealing with the source of the problem (dealing with TB in the badger population and the badger cull) rather than purely targeting cattle and cattle farmers. (33%)
- Need to work together to solve the problem (13%)
- Concern about the apparent lack of activity by Defra in tackling the problem (8%)
- Comments were also made about the testing intervals and pre-movement tests. A number of respondents felt that it should be 1 or 2 year testing for all herds or pre-movement testing for all herds rather than bringing in a new scheme (8%)
- Concerns expressed about the effect on trade (6%)
- If a system is introduced it needs to be simple and without too much additional paperwork (5%)
- Some felt the more information they had the better (4%)
- Already controlling their cattle risk (4%)
- Concerns about the irresponsible movements of cattle from high to low TB risk areas were raised by some farmers (4%)
4. Key Findings and Conclusions

The following key findings and conclusions bring together the findings of the telephone survey, focus groups and personal interviews and draw out those issues that we consider most relevant in exploring how a risk based trading scheme for TB may be introduced in England. The results of this study and the following conclusions were presented to the Working Group for consideration during the development of their recommendations to Ministers.

Appetite for a risk based trading scheme

- Farmers in low risk areas have a greater appetite for a scheme than those in high risk or edge of risk areas. Risk based trading schemes are already in place in some markets in low risk areas where there is trade with Scotland. This gives buyers the information they need to know whether animals will need post movement testing if they are moved into Scotland. English buyers also appear to value the provision of information on TB. Since the introduction of stricter regulations governing movement of animals into Scotland, demand for animals from high risk areas has decreased in low risk areas in the north of England.

- 90% of farmers in low risk areas said that they would not buy animals from a high risk area. In high risk areas, 57% of farmers said they would not buy cattle from high risk areas. Comments and survey figures suggest that this figure of 57% largely reflects the fact that most farmers in high risk areas think that badgers or neighbouring herds pose the highest risk in spreading TB to their cattle. They do not perceive purchased cattle to be a significant risk when compared with the risk from wildlife. As farmers feel that they have no control about the reservoir of infection in wildlife, they tend to have a fatalistic attitude about getting TB, and feel that it is outside their control. Another factor that may influence the buying practices of farmers in high risk areas is the fact that it may be more difficult for them to source cattle from low risk areas.

- In the telephone survey, 53% of farmers who had brought cattle onto their holding thought a scheme that provided information on TB status in a standard format would be valuable. The main factors affecting responses to this question were age and whether or not the farmer had experienced TB restrictions in the last two years. For respondents over 56 years of age, only 42% thought a scheme would be valuable, whilst 67% of respondents in the 46-55 years age bracket thought a scheme would be valuable. For farmers who have been under TB restrictions in the last two years, only 29% thought a scheme would be valuable, compared to 58% of those who hadn’t been under restrictions.

- There was also evidence that farmers who were members of cattle health schemes were more likely to view a potential scheme as valuable (69%) compared with those who were not a member of any scheme (42%). Overall, 30% of farmers interviewed for the telephone survey stated that they were not members of any scheme compared with 17% who claimed to be members of a health scheme.

- In the telephone survey, 65% of farmers who had moved cattle off their holdings stated that they would be willing to participate in a scheme that provided TB information in a standardised format. However, when farmers were asked this question, details of a scheme had not been described to them. Our work suggests that although farmers may appear to be broadly supportive of a scheme, there may be certain elements that they find unpalatable, and are unlikely to embrace.

- 84% of farmers who had bought cattle directly from another farmer stated that they had received sufficient information on TB. Whereas, of farmers who had sourced cattle from a dealer or buying group, only 55% felt they had been given sufficient information on TB status. For farmers buying from markets, 72% said they had been given sufficient information. These findings from the telephone survey are supported by the focus groups and personal
interviews which indicated that farmers favour direct communication with other farmers to gather information on stock they are considering buying.

- Auctioneers' appetite for a scheme varied significantly depending on the TB risk of the area they were trading in. In the high and edge of risk area, there was little appetite for introducing a scheme because there was concern that making farmers say when they were last under restriction would adversely affect trade for those farmers and also concern that a scheme would not be embraced by farmers, so markets would expend time and effort that would not be rewarded. This is in contrast to the auctioneer in the low risk area who is already operating a risk based trading scheme in response to the regulations controlling the movement of animals into Scotland.

- The vets supported a scheme. In the low risk area, it appeared that the existing scheme used by the local market was working well with minimal involvement of the farmers’ vet. In the high risk area, the vet in question was frustrated by the failure to tackle the wildlife reservoir, and feel that farmers will not value a trading scheme whilst the wildlife reservoir remains uncontrolled.

**Views on TB information to be provided in a scheme**

- Overall, current herd TB status and the date of last restriction were considered to be the most useful information for assessing an animal's TB risk status. However, farmers in high risk areas thought it would be unfair to expect farmers to say when they were last under restriction. There was a view that farmers who had been under restriction would be adversely affected, when it was felt to be out of their control that they had had TB. In high risk areas, it was felt that the TB restriction history of a herd should not be in the public domain, that farmers have a right to keep this information private. In the low risk area, farmers felt that the date of last restriction should be declared. This reluctance of farmers to declare the date of last restriction is considered to be a key challenge to the introduction of a voluntary scheme. In the high risk and edge of areas, the auctioneers were reluctant to request this information from their clients. This may suggest that a voluntary scheme could result in markets adopting the scheme to varying degrees, and some farmers favouring those markets where they are not asked to disclose information that they do not wish to disclose.

- Information on whether an animal has ever resided on a holding with a 1 or 2 yearly testing interval, or whether the herd from which the animal is moving has brought in stock from 1 or 2 yearly testing intervals in the last three years was deemed to be very useful by farmers in low risk areas and by dairy farmers. However, when farmers in the focus groups were questioned on the usefulness of this information, the general consensus was that this was more than they needed. In the personal interviews, farmers in low risk areas found this information on an animal’s TB history to be very valuable, whilst farmers in high risk areas generally thought this information was irrelevant to them.

- The auctioneer in the low risk area was already providing information on whether an animal had ever resided on a holding with a 1 or 2 yearly testing interval. Auctioneers in the high risk and edge of risk area felt that this information would be too time consuming to collect and pass on under the present system. As a consequence, none of these markets were asking whether the herd the animal is moving from has brought in any stock from 1 or 2 yearly testing areas in the previous three years. Whilst information on PTI status of the previous holding would be of value to some farmers, the consensus was that this information would be difficult to collate and unlikely to feature in an initial scheme in England.

**How should information be provided to farmers?**

- Farmers’ preferred way of receiving information on TB status was either a sale catalogue, or from the auctioneer at the point of sale. Farmers trading at markets are familiar with the electronic screens used to display an animal’s breed, date of birth and pre-movement test
date, and feel that this would be the best way of providing additional information. Farmers were generally not keen on the idea of a database that they could access. Partly because many were not comfortable with using this type of technology, and also because they did not like the idea of other farmers being able to look up information about their herds. Accessing a database at the market was not deemed useful due to lack of time. Sale catalogues were felt to be a good way of providing information as they enabled farmers to preview information on stock. However, sale catalogues are not routinely produced. At some markets, farmers are used to simply turning up on the day, without pre-booking, so using the sale catalogue would require a change from current market practices.

- All auctioneers were agreed that if a scheme were to be introduced, they would prefer a database where they could access the required information on TB status. Auctioneers also agreed that they did not want farmers to be bringing more paperwork to check prior to the sale.

**Attitudes to reducing risk by post purchase activities**

- 8% of respondents in the telephone survey said that they isolate and post-movement test animals from a high risk TB area that are moved into a low risk TB area. However, this figure should be viewed with caution as 75% of respondents who said they isolated and post movement tested were in high risk areas, so this question would not really apply to them. In the focus groups and personal interviews, no respondents said that they would isolate and post movement test. Farmers were not asked about isolation and post movement testing separately, however 3 farmers in the telephone survey said that they would isolate brought in cattle, without post-movement testing. This area of post-purchase activity is considered to be another key challenge to the introduction of a voluntary scheme. This work has shown that farmers generally feel that it is the onus of the seller to manage the risk of spreading TB, and that pre-movement testing is a reliable way of doing this. Farmers showed no appreciation that isolating purchased animals and post movement testing might be valuable.

**Views on a voluntary scheme**

- Farmers in low risk areas generally felt that a voluntary scheme would not be sufficient to eliminate risky trading practices that might introduce TB into their areas. These farmers favoured a mandatory scheme. Farmers in high risk and edge of risk areas were generally not very interested in a scheme, so if it were only voluntary, it seems likely that many would not embrace it. Auctioneers in the high and edge of risk areas felt that farmers in their areas would not embrace a voluntary scheme. The auctioneers themselves were reluctant to invest time and money in implementing a scheme that they felt farmers did not want. The vet in the high risk area felt that a voluntary scheme was unlikely to be successful.