

DNV

system survey: veterinary capacity in england to deliver pre-movement testing:

Report for Defra

Report no. 22117513

Date of issue: 22nd November 2006



MANAGING RISK

System Survey: Veterinary Capacity in England to
Deliver Pre-Movement Testing

DET NORSKE VERITAS LTD.
Palace House
3 Cathedral Street
SE19DE London
Tel: +44 (0)20 7357 6080
Fax: +44 (0)20 7357 6048
Registered in England
Company No. 1503799

For

The Department for Environment Food and Rural
Affairs
1A Page Street
London SW1P 4PQ

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Summary: This report presents the findings of an independent, high-level survey of the capacity and willingness of veterinary practices to fulfil the demand for pre-movement testing of cattle for bovine tuberculosis (TB) in England during phase 1 (implemented in March 2006) and phase 2 (to be implemented in March 2007).

Prepared by: *Name and position*
Richard Archer, Consultant
Philip Comer, Principal Consultant

Verified by: *Name and position*
Mark Boulton, Principal Consultant

Approved by: *Name and position*
Philip Comer, Principal Consultant

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an independent, high-level survey of the capacity and willingness of veterinary practices to fulfil the demand for pre-movement testing of cattle for bovine tuberculosis (TB) in England after March 2007, when the age exemption is reduced from 15 months to 42 days. This builds on a previous survey (DNV Report 22115204, dated 21st March 2006) that was carried out before the introduction of pre-movement TB testing on the 27th March 2006.

Methodology

Information was gathered from various sources. These included telephone interviews with:

- 60 Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs) that carry out TB testing or, in a few cases, their Practice Managers
- nine Divisional Veterinary Managers (DVMs) of the State Veterinary Service (SVS), drawn from the highest risk regions in England
- veterinary professional bodies
- organisations representing the farming industry and livestock auctioneers.

A structured questionnaire was developed and used for interviews with both the LVIs and the DVMs.

Demand and Pricing

The 'Regulatory Impact Assessment: Pre-movement Testing in England' assumed that there would be around 200,000 movements subject to pre-movement tests in Phase 1, rising to 400,000 movements/annum in England subject to special pre-movement tests in Phase 2. The SVS report that there have been 93,899 pre-movement tests carried out in England from April to August 2006 in 7712 testing events (average 12 animals per test). This would indicate some 225,000 tests per year, suggesting that slightly more cattle than anticipated would have been tested during Phase 1.

The number of qualifying movements is expected to at least double when the age limit is reduced from 15 months to 42 days. However, the actual level of demand is difficult to estimate as this will depend on a range of factors, such as how farming practices might change in response to the requirement for testing, the number of herds under restriction, and the use of exempt markets and exempt finishing units.

The cost of pre-movement tests varies widely with a number of alternative pricing approaches. The majority of practices (55%) charge a visit fee and then their normal hourly rate, some (23%) charge per head and others (17%) use the SVS rates for routine testing. The cost for individual animals can be quite high, with an average of £51 (but a range from £7 up to £87), but falling to only £5.00 per head (range £3 to £8) for a group of 25. The LVIs that charged by time felt this acted as an incentive to the farmer to be well prepared and so reduce the time required.

Some LVIs have reported that an increasing number of farmers appear to be finishing cattle in order to avoid the need for pre-movement tests. If a significant number of farmers were to do this it could reduce the additional demand for pre-movement testing when the age limit is reduced. However, many farms will not have the facilities or resources to finish stock.

Capacity and Willingness

Most veterinary practices reported that they had coped well following the introduction of pre-movement TB testing in March, with only two practices reporting problems. Veterinary practices nearly all stated that they were happy to continue carrying out pre-movement TB Testing. There had been some problems meeting requests for tests with short notice, but LVIs report that farmers have become better over the year at giving sufficient notice.

In the March DNV survey, it was reported that 90% of practices expected to meet the demand for pre-movement TB testing. In the current survey, the attitude of most LVIs remains positive but there was an increased level of concern. For example, 13% of veterinary practices interviewed said that they would not cope with the additional demand without introducing locums or starting to recruit and 75% thought it was possible that there would be periods of demand for pre-movement TB testing that could outstrip supply, although the majority of these veterinary practices stated that they would cope.

One AHDO (Exeter) has reported that LVI capacity is usually exceeded during March and April, and pre-movement tests have added to this demand. An increased number of LVIs (since the March survey), such as in Derbyshire and Northumbria, also expressed concerns about capacity during peak periods. Some ADHOs, such as Leicester and Gloucester, have expressed concerns that capacity might be exceeded during peak periods.

There were some reports that routine tests had been returned by LVIs due to capacity problems but so far this has not been a major problem. In general, the SVS do not have the capacity with their own staff to take on routine tests and they would need to find an alternative LVI. Data on overdue tests does not, to date, indicate a general problem with capacity for routine tests.

A tenth of veterinary practices interviewed had recently recruited an extra LVI, at least partly to satisfy the demand for pre-movement TB testing. In addition, just under a tenth are currently actively recruiting or seriously considering starting to recruit. The remaining 80% of veterinary practices consider that they have sufficient capacity or have a reactive approach to recruitment.

If farmers are unable to get their regular LVI to perform a pre-movement TB test, e.g. during peak periods, they need to be prepared to contact other veterinary practices to arrange the test.

Conclusion

The expectation of most of the LVIs interviewed was that they would be able to meet the additional demand for pre-movement testing when the age limit is reduced from 15 months to 42 days in March 2007. This was also supported by the DVMs interviewed. However, there is a higher level of concern than found in the March survey, and there may be times when the veterinary capacity is overloaded in some areas.

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Appendix 1: Veterinary Practice Survey Form

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1.0 Introduction

This report presents the findings of an independent, high-level survey of the capacity and willingness of veterinary practices to fulfil the demand for pre-movement testing of cattle for bovine tuberculosis (TB) in England after March 2007, when the age exemption is reduced from 15 months to 42 days. This builds on a previous survey (DNV Report 22115204, dated 21st March 2006) that was carried out before the introduction of pre-movement TB testing on the 27th March 2006.

Pre-movement testing was introduced in order to reduce the risk of spreading TB from herds in high risk areas, to herds in areas that are currently free of the disease, and between herds in high risk areas. Essentially, the order requires that cattle from herds that are subject to 1 or 2 yearly routine TB testing are tested for TB before they are moved from the holding, unless they are being sent direct to slaughter, or satisfy a number of other defined exemptions. Currently the order does not apply to cattle aged less than 15 months, but this exemption will be reduced from 15 months to 42 days on the 1st March 2007.

This change in age limit is expected to result in a significant increase in demand for pre-movement testing, particularly in some months. For beef suckler herds, this means that store cattle (under the age of 15 months) that are moved for finishing will require a pre-movement TB test, which at present they do not. The impact on dairy farmers is expected to be relatively less, as many excess dairy calves are sold before they are 42 days old.

In reviewing whether veterinary practices have sufficient capacity to respond to the demand from farmers for pre-movement TB testing after March 2007, there are essentially two perspectives:

- For regions dominated by suckler herds, will the veterinary practice capacity be sufficient to satisfy demand for pre-movement TB testing during the winter months? Although this is not a peak period of cattle movement, any pre-movement TB tests will need to be completed, on top of a base-load of routine testing that is concentrated during December to April. The majority of routine TB tests for sucker herds are carried out when the animals are housed over the winter months.
- For regions dominated by dairy herds, will the veterinary practice capacity be sufficient to satisfy demand for pre-movement TB testing during periods with a large number of movements, such as during sale times in spring and autumn, and the rush before turnout.

1.1 Det Norske Veritas (DNV)

DNV is an independent foundation, established in 1864, with the objective of safeguarding life, property and the environment. DNV is among the world's leading companies in managing risks in areas of safety and the environment for today's industrial and societal settings. Throughout its history DNV has had a rule-setting function and/or determined conformance and compliance to Rules, Standards and Regulations. Being an independent, autonomous and self-owned foundation, DNV undertakes third party services requiring high technical expertise and the utmost integrity in all respects.

1.2 Conflicts of Interest

This report has been prepared as an independent assessment. DNV has no links to farming or other interests that could be affected by the requirement for pre-movement testing. Philip

Comer, who has overall responsibility for the study within DNV, is a Partner in a hill farm on Exmoor, where he and his wife run a beef suckler herd.

1.3 Acknowledgements

This study has largely been based on a telephone survey of practicing veterinarians. We gratefully acknowledge the inputs we have had from all those we interviewed, and appreciate the positive response and willingness to give up time to contribute to this study. It would not have been possible without them.

2.0 Objective

The objectives of this survey are:

- To build on the survey published in March 2006, to review whether veterinary practices expect to have capacity to respond to projected demands from farmers for pre-movement testing the exemption is reduced to 42 days of age.
- To review how veterinary practices have managed to meet the demand from farmers for pre-movement TB testing to date.
- To review the willingness of LVI's to carry out pre-movement testing and identify where further guidance or communication efforts are needed, prior to March 2007.

The scope of this survey does not include any review of the pre-movement testing policy.

3.0 Scope

As for the March survey, this survey has only considered veterinary practices in regions that are expected to have a high demand for pre-movement TB testing. More specifically, veterinary practices were included from the regions of the Animal Health Divisional Offices (AHDOS) that have a large number of herds with 1 to 2 yearly testing parishes and, therefore, the number of herds that may require testing per practice is relatively high. The nine AHDOS included in the survey are listed in

Table 1.

This study has been carried out from the 13th October to the 17th November 2006.

Table 1: List of AHDOs included in Survey

AHDO	Counties	Number of herds in 1 year testing parishes	Number of herds in 2 yearly testing parishes	Total herds in 1-2 yearly testing parishes	Number of vet practices	Herds per practice
Carlisle	Cumbria	494	307	801	24	33
Exeter	Devon	4271	1194	5465	33	166
Gloucester	Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	3402	274	3676	41	90
Leicester	Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and West Midlands - Rutland	450	239	689	34	20
Newcastle	Cleveland, County Durham, Northumberland, Teesside and Tyne and Wear	63	115	178	20	9
Stafford	Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire	2547	2339	4886	42	116
Truro	Cornwall	3050	438	3488	23	152
Taunton	Dorset and Somerset	1257	1130	2387	37	65
Worcester	Hereford, Shropshire and Worcester	3231	1981	5212	44	119
Total		18,765	8017	26,872	298	

Source: State Veterinary Service (March 2006 data)

4.0 Methodology

As for the previous survey, information was gathered from various sources. These included telephone interviews (and a few face-to-face interviews) with:

- 60 veterinary practices within the higher risk regions of England (more interviews in a few regions were carried out compared to the previous study). 52 of these Interviews were with LVIs, eight were with practice managers of large practices.
- All the Divisional Veterinary Managers (DVMs) of the 9 AHDOs within the scope.
- State Veterinary Service, central office.
- Professional bodies: British Veterinary Association (including October 2004 Survey), British Cattle Veterinary Association and Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.
- Trade bodies: Livestock Auctioneers Association and National Farmers Union.

The veterinary practices and DVM survey question sets are given in the appendix of this report. The questionnaires covered a range of topics – the key topics are listed below:

1. Current situation.
 - a. Do veterinary practices have sufficient capacity to satisfy the demand from farmers for pre-movement TB testing?
 - b. Have veterinary practices done anything to increase their capacity for pre-movement TB testing?
 - c. Have farm practices changed as a result of the introduction of pre-movement TB testing?
 - d. How is pre-movement TB testing charged, and on what rates?

2. Post March-2007
 - a. Will veterinary practices have sufficient capacity to satisfy the demand from farmers for pre-movement TB testing once the age exemption is reduced to 42 days? If not, what will be the periods of peak demand?
 - b. Do veterinary practices plan to do anything to increase their capacity for pre-movement TB testing?
 - c. Will veterinary practices continue to offer pre-movement TB testing?

Unlike the previous survey, the readiness and preparedness of veterinary practices was not a focus of this survey as the changes in exemption rules come March 2007 will be relatively simple: just the reduction in the exemption age.

The 60 veterinary practices represent approximately a fifth of the veterinary practices in the 9 regions within the scope. The location of the veterinary practices interviewed is shown in Table 2.

5.0 Assessment of Demand

The 'Regulatory Impact Assessment: Pre-movement Testing in England' assumed that there would be around 200,000 movements subject to pre-movement tests in Phase 1, rising to 400,000 movements/ annum in England subject to special pre-movement tests in Phase 2. The SVS report that there have been 93,899 pre-movement tests carried out in England from April to August 2006 in 7712 testing events (average 12 animals per test). This would indicate some 225,000 tests per year, suggesting that slightly more cattle than anticipated would have been tested during Phase 1.

The current demand for pre-movement TB testing was as expected for two thirds of veterinary practices interviewed. This demand was only more than they expected for 8% of veterinary practices.

Table 2: Location of Veterinary Practices Interviewed

AHDO	Number of Veterinary Practices interviewed by AHDO region	Counties	Number of Veterinary Practices interviewed by county
Carlisle	4	Cumbria	4
Exeter	11	Devon	11
Gloucester	6	Avon	1
		Gloucestershire	4
		Wiltshire	1
Leicester	2	Leicestershire	0
		Northamptonshire	0
		Warwickshire	1
		West Midlands	0
		Rutland	1
Newcastle	7	Cleveland	0
		County Durham	0
		Northumberland	7
		Teesside	0
		Tyne and Wear	0
Stafford	15	Cheshire	3
		Derbyshire	7
		Staffordshire	5
Taunton	7	Dorset	2
		Somerset	5
Truro	4	Cornwall	4
Worcester	4	Hereford	2
		Shropshire	1
		Worcester	1

Demand is highest during:

- Sale times in spring and autumn.
- The rush before turnout.
- Peak testing time when cattle are housed for winter.

Assessing the future level of demand for pre-movement TB testing at different times of the year is difficult and complex because of uncertainty around:

- How farm practices will continue to change as a result of the TB order and change in age exemptions.
- The number of cattle that are being moved just under the age of 15 months.
- The number of herds under restriction.
- The number of movements to be covered by Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOAs).
- The use of exempt markets and exempt finishing units.

- Decline in dairy farming.
- Other influences that could cause short-term demand changes, such as cattle price fluctuations and the weather (This year, the grass burnt off, so there might be a need to move cattle if it is expensive to feed animals throughout the winter).

LVI gave anecdotal evidence that a large number of cattle are currently being moved just under the 15 month exemption age, to avoid the need for a pre-movement TB test. LVIs reported that there is a relative shortage of calves over 15 months available for finishing. Also, some LVIs reported they had seen a large number of cattle being moved just under the exemption age. LVIs had seen these movements when they were called out to pre-movement TB test a few animals, which part of a large group which are mostly under 15 months in age. The number of cattle being moved just under the current exemption age, however, could not be quantified by anyone interviewed.

Some LVIs have suggested that farmers might also avoid pre-movement TB testing by using “loop holes” in the system. One LVI put it: “Some farm clients have rented keep that is in a parish outside the high-risk parish (that the farm is in). Two separate holding numbers for the same farm means that tests do not get done. LVIs do not know when there is more than one holding number, so the system can be cheated”.

The current number of approved exempt markets and finishing units is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Numbers of Exempt Markets and Exempt Finishing Units

AHDO	Countries	Number of approved Exempt Markets	Number of TB Exempt Finishing Units
Carlisle	Cumbria	6	0
Exeter	Devon	5	9
Gloucester	Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire	2	9
Leicester	Leicestershire, Northamptonshire Rutland, Warwickshire and West Midlands.	2	1
Newcastle	Cleveland, County Durham, Northumberland, Teesside and Tyne and Wear	4	1
Stafford	Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire	5	27
Taunton	Dorset and Somerset	3	5
Truro	Cornwall	6	3
Worcester	Hereford, Shropshire and Worcester	6	14
Total		39	69
Total for all AHDOs		42	72

Source: State Veterinary Service, November 2006. Note that not all EFUs are listed on SVS web site.

72 Exempt Finishing Units (EFU) is a considerable increase since March 2006, when eight were approved and 59 were expressing an interest or applying formally.

5.1 Farm Practices

The introduction of pre-movement TB testing, and the subsequent change in the age exemption, are likely to result in some changes to farm practices. The degree to which farm practices change will then affect the level of demand for pre-movement testing. There are a number of possible changes in farm practices that could influence:

- The number of cattle movements, such as beef farmers choosing to finish stock, where before the calves were sold at about one year old for finishing.
- The number of pre-movement tests needed for any number of movements, such as coordinating routine TB testing with planned movements.
- The incidence of TB, which will influence the number of 1-2 yearly testing parishes and the amount of short interval testing required, such as encouraging farmers to purchase animals from regions with low-levels of TB,

A number of LVIs reported that there has been an increase in farmers choosing to finish their stock to avoid the costs of pre-movement TB testing, although this will require that the farm has sufficient space and feed available for the increase in numbers. The extent of this possible change in practice is difficult to predict but it is likely to be greater when the age limit for testing is reduced to 42 days.

There is evidence from the survey that some farmers have coordinated major movements with their routine TB test. The SVS have allowed some flexibility in the timing of the routine test to enable this when asked. Farmers will time their routine TB test when that fits in with their business, but many will have a number of movements over a year.

Farmers have been reluctant to group their cattle for testing, to enjoy economies of scale, even when other cattle might be moved within 60 days. However, there was some anecdotal evidence that farms are increasingly gearing up for monthly sales rather than frequent small sales, and of some farmers including extra cattle in tests because they might be moved. Small farms have been particularly resistant to batch cattle sales: some small farms continue to take a few animals to market every week, as is their established practice, for cash flow reasons. Many LVIs stated that they tried to encourage farmers to batch animals, so that farmers benefit from economies of scale, but planning ahead for many small farms is difficult. In addition, some farmers choose to have separate tests completed, even when the movements are certain to be within 60 days, to reduce the risk of having movements stopped. For example, if a farmer wishes to move a bull, it is more likely that this will be prevented if the bull is tested with other animals. If he is tested in a larger group, and one of the other animals has a positive test, the bull's movements would be restricted.

LVIs reported that a few farmers arrange for pre-movement TB tests even when cattle are planned to be sent to slaughter. These farmers believe that the costs of pre-movement TB tests are outweighed by the benefits. With pre-movement TB tests, the sale of cattle is more flexible, as the cattle do not need to be sold for slaughter. Also, cattle with pre-movement TB tests at slaughter markets are separated from those that do not have these tests (to keep the flexibility) into less densely populated pens, where they are cleaner and look more attractive to purchasers.

LVIs had no evidence that the introduction of pre-movement testing has encouraged farmers to purchase from regions with low incidences of bovine TB. Most farmers buy relatively locally, to reduce transport costs. A few LVIs suggested that the introduction of pre-movement testing

might actually slightly increase the likelihood of a farmer purchasing from a market in a high-risk area, because the information from the test about the cattle purchased.

There were concerns expressed by both LVIs and the SVS that the reduction in the age limit for pre-movement tests will place an additional financial burden on some farmers, which will strengthen any negative views of farmers towards government agencies and make it harder to work with them. There have also been cases of farmers that have been prevented from moving cattle for a considerable time without any proven TB. The burden is resented by farmers whose holdings may be on the boundary between an annual testing parish and a four year testing parish, where testing and restrictions may appear illogical. However, the formula used by the SVS to determine the testing interval is set out in EU rules. Keeping beef farmers onside is important if they are to be encouraged to have their routine tests in the summer, to reduce the testing burden in the winter months (November to March).

5.2 Pricing of Pre-movement TB tests

The price of pre-movement TB tests will influence demand. Higher prices would be expected to result in an increase in the percentage of cattle going directly to slaughter and drive greater changes in farming practices.

Of the 60 veterinary practices interviewed, over 55 were able to give cost estimates for 1, 25, 100 and 250 animals. A few were unable to give cost estimates for 250 animals as such sizes had not been considered. One viewed the rates as confidential.

The average prices for pre-movement TB testing are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Average Price of Pre-movement TB Test

Test size	Average price	Minimum	Maximum
1 animal	£51	£7	£87
25 animals	£115	£76	£192
100 animals	£329	£207	£540
250 animals	£754	£415	£1544

There were a number of different approaches to setting the prices for pre-movement tests. There were three main approaches:

- A visit fee and then a charge for time on farm.
- A visit fee and then a charge per head of cattle tested.
- As per the LVI rates (as stated by the SVS for routine TB testing).

The percentage of veterinary practices using these pricing approaches is shown below in Figure 1.

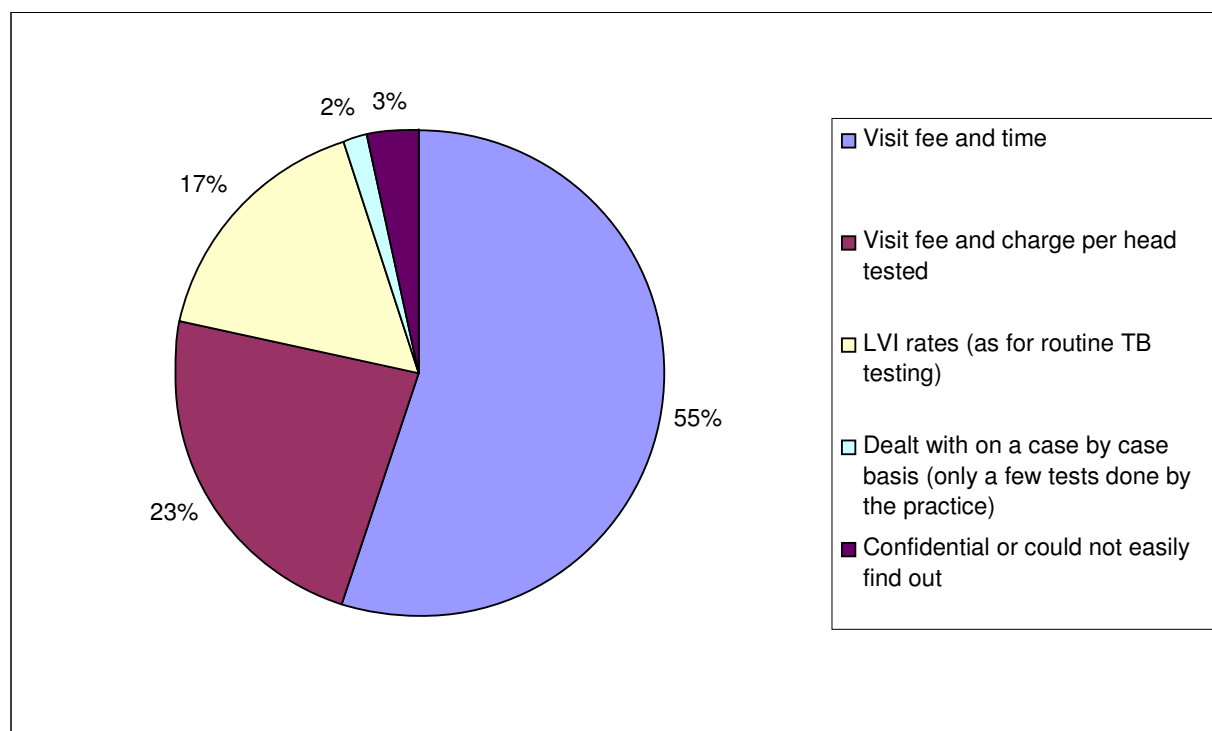


Figure 1: Alternative Pricing Approaches for Pre-movement tests

There were also a number of variations on the above approaches. Several practices charged an administration charge, such as £5 on top of other fees. Also, it is not uncommon for prices of tests for a few animals to be determined sympathetically – here LVIs did not think they could charge for their time on the farm as this was disproportionate to the value added for the farmer. Much more rarely, other costs were fully or partially waived for the second visit of the test, such as travel time or time on the farm.

Visit fees can vary with the length of journey for the LVI. When LVIs charged a visit fee, LVIs were asked to give a visit fee for an 'average' journey. The average visit fee was reported to be £15. On farm time was usually charged at £60-85, although a few charge over £100/hour and a few only £50/hour. Some veterinary practices had lower charges for dairy farmers. In calculating prices, it was assumed that each animal tested would take 1 minute (each visit), which assumes that the test is run efficiently. This may not be realistic for small groups of animals (e.g. less than 10) due to time to set up. A number of LVIs interviewed stated that they use this assumption when scheduling their testing.

The average charges for pre-movement TB testing are shown for each pricing approach in Figure 2. This shows that pricing using the LVI rates for routine TB testing gives the lowest prices. Of the other two approaches, the cheapest price is delivered by costing per time for all but the smallest tests, but this would not be so if tests took longer than normal. Costing on time would result in a much higher price for inefficient tests. Inefficient tests could result from a lack of preparation (the animals could still be in the field), a lack of ear tags, poor equipment (e.g. cattle handling facilities) and type/age of animal. LVIs that charged by time felt this acted as an incentive to the farmer to be well prepared.

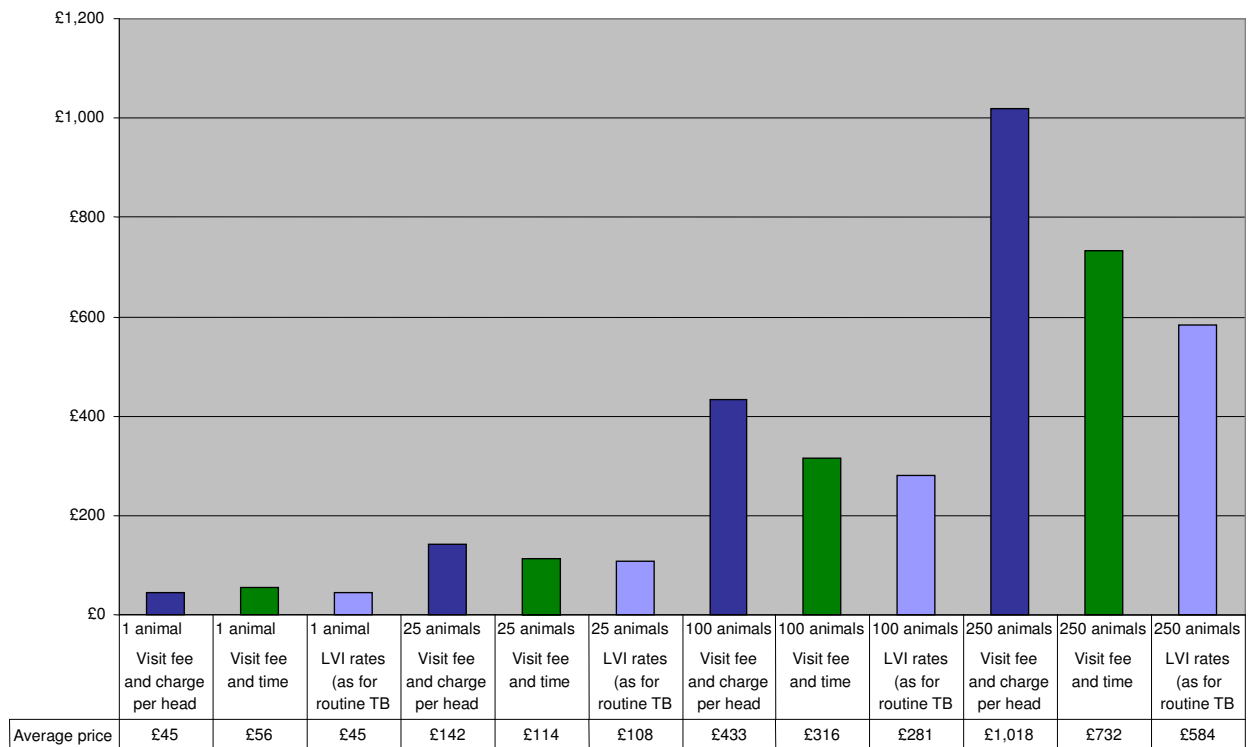


Figure 2: Prices of different Pricing Approaches

6.0 Capacity

There are currently 1876 large animal LVIs practicing in the 9 ADHO regions within the scope of this survey (SVS data). This is 443 more large animal LVIs in the 9 ADHO regions than in 2000.

The number of Large Animal LVIs in January 2000 and as at 30th September 2006 is shown in Figure 3.

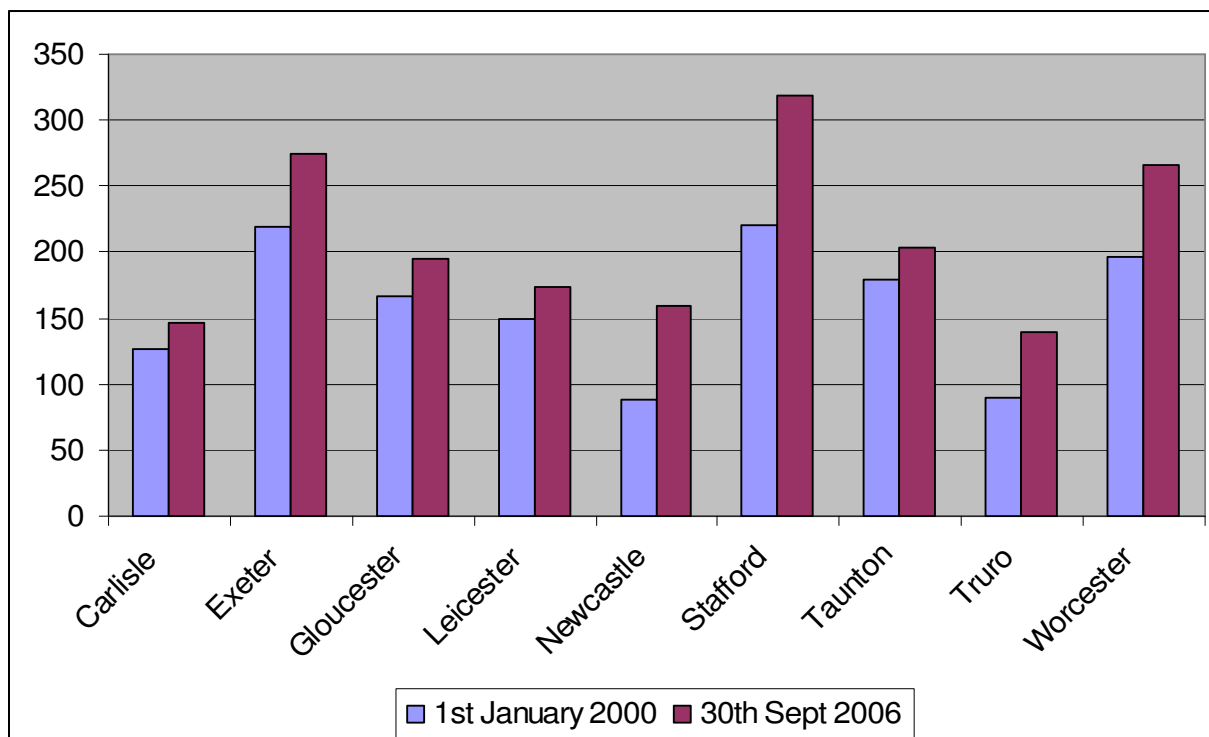


Figure 3: The Number of (Large Animal) LVIs in 2000 and 2006

The number of additional LVIs (that are Panel 1a and thereby approved for TB testing) for reach AHDO region are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Change in the number of Large Animal LVIs

ADHO region	Change in LVI numbers between January 2000 and September 30th 2006
Carlisle	+20
Exeter	+55
Gloucester	+29
Leicester	+24
Newcastle	+72
Stafford	+97
Taunton	+25
Truro	+51
Worcester	+70

Source: SVS

The veterinary industry is categorised by small partnerships that tend to offer services locally. The veterinary practices interviewed had an average of five full-time LVIs (panel 1a). Many large animal LVIs also do small animal work. Communication between rival practices is generally poor, such that that practices do not get a broad view of LVI capacity, and tend to base recruitment on local influences.

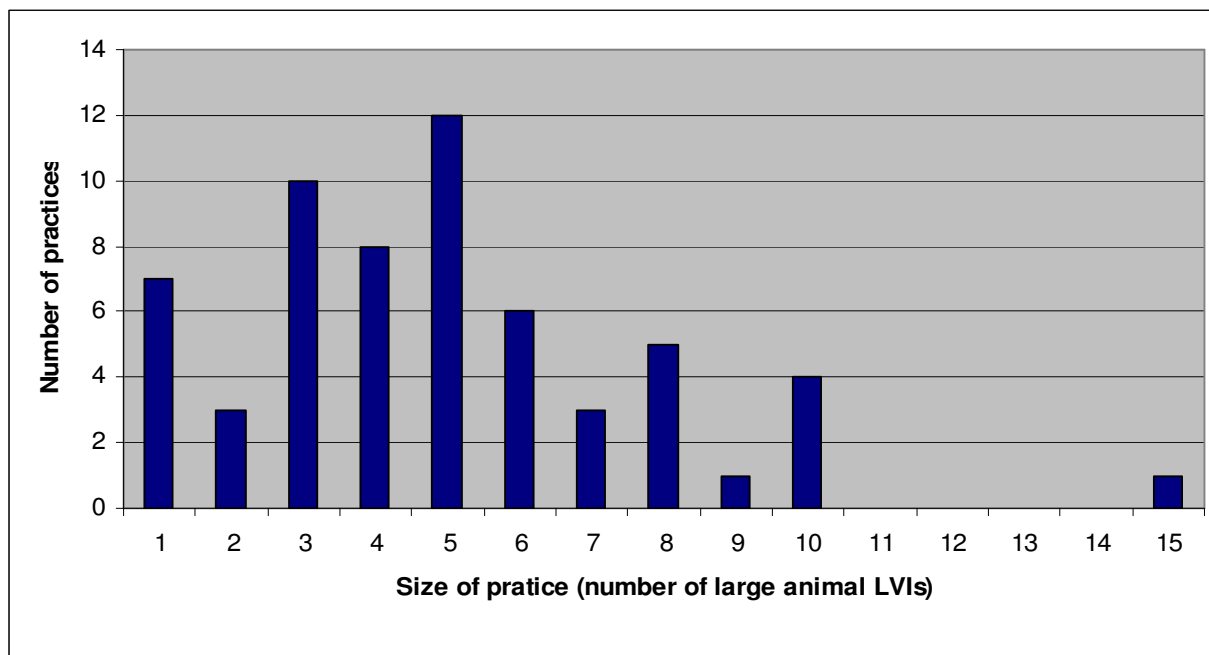


Figure 4: Number of LVIs per Practice Interviewed

6.1 LVI Capacity for Phase 1

Of the 60 veterinary practices interviewed, only two practices stated that they had not coped with the introduction of pre-movement TB testing. These practices had passed routine TB testing work back to the SVS. Peak periods were largely manageable in 2006, with the exception of Devon in March and April (with the rush on tests before turnout) when LVI capacity was exceeded temporarily.

Since the introduction of pre-movement TB testing in March 2006, the number of overdue routine TB tests has increased significantly over those in 2005 but is similar to the position in the previous years as shown in Figure 5. If LVIs were unable to cope with their workloads, their schedules would slip and routine TB tests would become overdue (if not prioritised). The present situation does not, to date, indicate a general problem with capacity for routine tests.

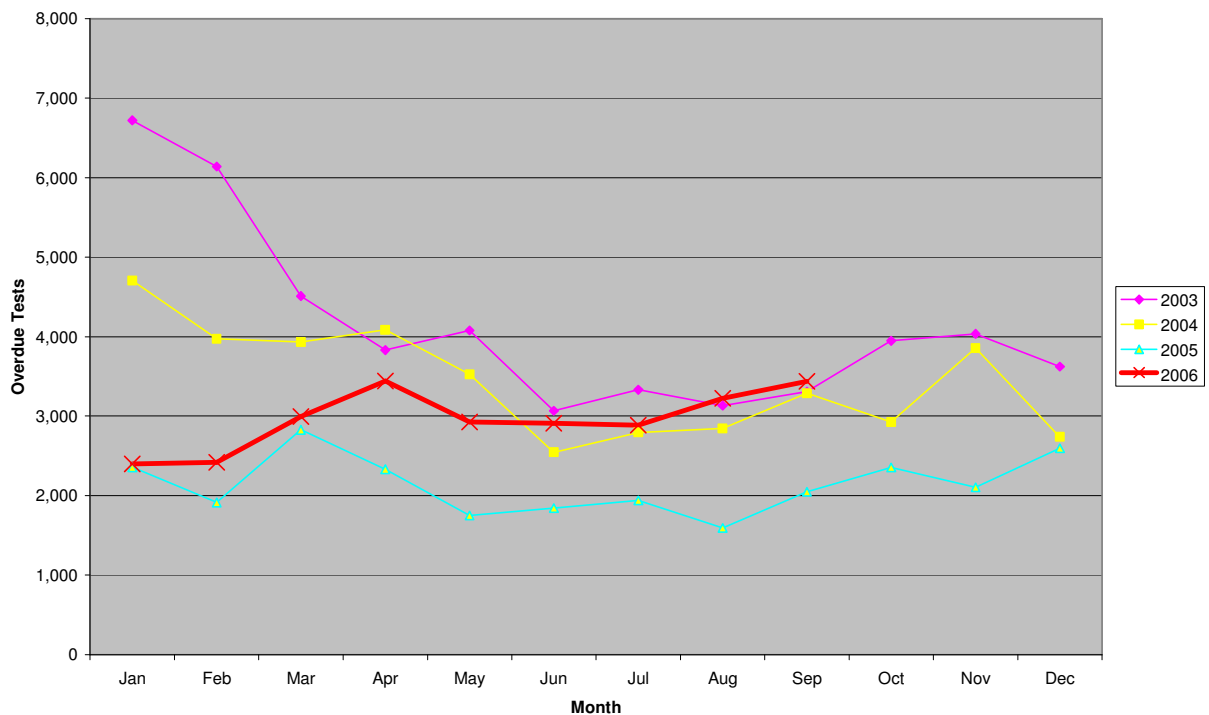


Figure 5: Overdue TB tests in GB 2003 – 2006 (Source SVS, November 2006)

Many practices were unable to satisfy requests within 1 to 2 weeks for pre-movement TB tests from farmers that gave little notice. LVIs reported that farmers have become better over the year at giving sufficient notice. The numbers of animals to be tested in pre-movement TB tests tend to be much smaller than for routine TB tests, where the whole herd can be tested. The majority of pre-movement TB tests are for 5 to 20 animals. Tests for such small groups can usually be fitted into a veterinary practice’s schedule in even the busiest week, although the nature of the test, requiring two visits 72 hours apart, reduces flexibility.

Just over a tenth of veterinary practices interviewed have recruited LVIs for pre-movement TB testing, although many more have used locums. A few of these recruitments, however, were a result of staff resigning because of the high level of TB testing carried out. Most veterinary practices would not normally recruit LVIs solely to respond to the demand for TB tests; there are normally a number of reasons. Just under a tenth of veterinary practices are currently actively recruiting or seriously considering starting to recruit.

For the majority of veterinary practices, recruitment tends to be reactive. Practices, which rarely have demand for more than ten LVIs, widely view recruitment as too risky to be made in advance of demand increases. Recruitment risks are related to uncertainties in future demand, possible government postponement of policy introduction and shift in government policy. Also the work is seasonal, so the new recruit might not be fee earning for large parts of the year, although very busy in peak periods. It was commonly stated that experienced large animal vets were difficult to recruit and that work permits are a barrier to recruiting vets from abroad.

Nearly all the LVIs were happy with the information they received at the start of pre-movement TB testing; any confusion was easily resolved with a phone call to the SVS. The DEFRA brochure on pre-movement TB tests was complimented for being clear. A few LVIs suggested that communications directly to each LVI (such as through letters), rather than only to the practice, is appropriate when major policy changes are being introduced.

6.2 LVI Phase 2 Capacity

Two thirds of veterinary practices knew of the March 2007 change in age exemptions.

There appears to be individual veterinary practices or small groups of neighbouring practices where capacity might be exceeded in busy periods of the year. In Devon it is likely the capacity will continue to be temporally exceeded during March and April. A few LVIs in Derbyshire and Northumberland, who largely service beef suckler farmers, were concerned that capacity would be exceeded during the winter months (December to March) when cattle are inside and when routine testing and other work is intensive.

13% of veterinary practices interviewed said that they would not cope without introducing locums or starting to recruit. This was highest in Derbyshire where four out of the seven practices interviewed stated that work would need to be turned away, and that recruitment was proving difficult. One Derbyshire LVI explained "I expect that I will need to turn away work. We are a small practice and we would not recruit if there was uncertainty that there would be enough work for another person. My two neighbouring practices were two months behind with routine testing last winter (2005/06) and so unless there is recruitment (in the area), there will not be capacity. Maybe they have recruited, I don't know."

A tenth of veterinary practices interviewed had recently recruited an extra LVI, at least partly to satisfy the demand for pre-movement TB testing. In addition, just under a tenth are currently actively recruiting or seriously considering starting to recruit. The remaining 80% of veterinary practices consider that they have sufficient capacity or have a reactive approach to recruitment.

Three quarters of veterinary practices thought it was possible that there would be periods of demand for pre-movement TB testing that could possibly outstrip supply, although the majority of these veterinary practices stated that they would cope. Practices could not say that they would always meet demand because of uncertainties in the general demand for pre-movement TB testing, known busy periods and the possibility of peak periods of demand.

Practices reported a number of alternative strategies for coping during peak periods of pre-movement TB testing. These include:

- Working longer hours.
- The greater utilisation of part-time staff.
- Use of LVIs that predominately do small animal work.
- Short-term use of retired LVIs/ delaying retirement.
- The use of locums.
- Reducing emergency cover.
- Returning routine TB tests.

LVI's report that in regions dominated by beef cattle the majority of the routine TB tests are carried out in the winter months when the cattle are housed. Veterinary capacity in some areas is already stretched over this period so any requirement for pre-movement tests would need to be added into an already busy LVI schedule. For dairy herds the timing of the routine tests is more flexible so that the periods where capacity for pre-movement testing will be most stretched are those periods with the greatest cattle movements, such as during sale times in spring and autumn.

If their normal LVI is unable to provide a pre-movement TB test when required, farmers will need to look to other veterinary practices for this service. Farmers may feel reluctant to do this. However, without a willingness of farmers to instruct veterinary practices with capacity, delays in some testing will occur.

The UK Government offered to pay farmers for one pre-movement TB test between 20 February and 30 June 2006, with a €3,000 maximum ceiling. How the LVI's responded to the demand for free tests is difficult to use as an indicator for a higher than usual level of demand as the tests were not advertised widely. Only a third of veterinary practices reported a rush to carry out free tests.

The following LVI quotes illustrate the different views given during interviews:

Positive

- "With the dwindling number of farmers, we would not turn work down. We could even take on a little extra work to support other practices."
- "I think we will cope, even if we need to get another vet in. In the North, the routine testing is carried out when (cattle are) housed, which makes October to March very busy. For dairy herds, anytime (for routine TB testing) is possible. There is pressure from the SVS to spread out testing (for store cattle), but farmers resist this."
- "We will cope; we always do".
- "We will meet any demand, even if we have to work weekends."
- "We have spare capacity of half a vet. We would welcome additional work."
- "We will work around it, we always do; we have not let any one down yet. Even if Vets are out there working at 8 o'clock at night, we will do the work."
- "In late summer, we will try to plan as much as possible. We do tend to cope. If everyone wants their test in a 1 to 2 month period, it might not be possible. We have a person to book the tests, and planning (for Phase 2) will start soon."
- "We have already recruited an extra vet for TB testing, and are considering whether we should recruit another. We also have a number of small animal vets in the practice, who would not mind helping out in a busy week."

Negative

- "(Pre-movement TB testing) Work is very seasonal - just for 4 months during the summer. There would not be enough work (during the other months) for recruitment. So I don't know if we will cope. There are other practices in the area, but I think they are in the same situation as us. We will do our very best to do it and would speak to the SVS (if there were problems)".
- It (Phase 2) could double the work load. We hope that most people will try and sell their spring cattle before March. Next year could be much more hellish."
- "Demand will more than double (for pre-movement TB testing) as most calves are sold as yearlings. We might not be able to cope."

- “We will work it in, we will manage. We are under pressure from the normal TB test workload anyway. We are often 2 months behind on our routine TB testing.”
- “We would not work longer hours - we can't work any longer hours. And small animal work takes priority.”
- “In the winter months, we are already working long hours and weekends. I can't see how we can fit in more, unless we recruit, which we are considering.”
- “We have been behind by 2 to 3 months, which was resolved at the price of short interval work. The short interval work would be given up as farmers that do want to go on restriction. Many of the other practices we speak to are also in the same position.”
- “We will try to recruit. But the size of pre-movement tests do not always provide enough revenue to cover locum costs. A locum costs £250 (a day), and they would need to do 300-400 tests to make hiring a locum profitable. No one can have a long-term contract with the risk of lay testing coming.”
- “We could struggle. The amount of TB testing compared to two years ago has doubled. Most of the farmers (in our area) are under restrictions. It (Phase 2) would not double it, but it would get to a point where we might give up large animal work. We might give up large animal work, because it is economically not working. The old partners want to keep doing it for the moment, but the newer partners would rather we gave up all the large animal work, because of the decline in agriculture, the hassles of organising the visits and writing up the TB tests, the lack of planning from farmers and the relatively low rates. The planned exception change might push us (the Practice) to give up large animal work.”
- “Some farms have poor facilities and a lot of animals with missing ear tags - these tests can take all day. In the future, these types of jobs will not be accepted. We are considering asking the SVS to do tests for such farms.”

6.3 State Veterinary Service Capacity

Pre-movement testing does put additional demands on SVS staff, even though the prime testing is carried out by LVIs. Two of the AHDOs reported that up to 50% of the test charts they receive were for pre-movement tests. This must represent a significant increase in workload, which will increase further when the 15 month age exemption is dropped.

The SVS workload from pre-movement testing includes work for:

- Administration of tests.
- Audit pre-movement tests (including the identification of movements that required testing, checking that tests were carried out and taking action over any failures).
- Carrying out routine TB testing in exceptional situations, such as for:
 - Reactor tests (where the LVI might find testing difficult because of close relationship with the farmer.
 - Tests that can not be safely completed at a normal speed of working.
 - Tests for farmers who are not paying their veterinary bills, but are still needed for welfare reasons.

The SVS capacity should not limit the time for a farmer to obtain a written record for a clear test. When the pre-movement tests are clear, the LVI should send the original test chart to the SVS and a copy direct to the farmer. This does not need to wait for SVS verification. If tests are inconclusive or positive, the same actions would be taken as for a routine test.

Several LVIs stated that if the LVI capacity was exceeded, then they viewed this, “as a problem for the SVS”, as they would just return routine TB test work. In such cases, the SVS generally would look to find another veterinary practice to take on the work. AHDOs generally have a number of Veterinary Officers and Animal Health Officers who are approved for TB testing. However, such staff are generally fully deployed with other work, and the SVS does not have the capacity to take on large-scale routine TB testing. Also, during other emergency situations, such as during any avian flu (AI) or foot and mouth outbreak, the SVS veterinary capacity would already be stretched and would not be able to take on any additional TB testing work.

Routine TB tests would only be returned to the SVS if overloaded LVIs preferred to return routine TB testing work, rather than delay pre-movement TB tests (most LVIs stated that they would be very reluctant to give up either).

Which of these outcomes is more likely will depend on the LVI’s attitude to pre-movement testing. Reasons given by LVIs for their preferences are listed in Table 6. Some of the AHDO’s reported that they had seen some routine tests being returned, but this had not happened in significant numbers so far.

Table 6: LVI TB Testing Preferences

Reasons for preferring pre-movement TB testing	Reasons for preferring routine TB testing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-movement testing can be charged at private (higher) rates. • Private clients provide veterinary practices with a range of work. • Pre-movement TB testing gets the LVI onto the farm on a regular basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some farmers have no objections going onto ‘standstill’ if they have no movements planned) • LVI income from pre-movement TB testing is less than for routine TB testing (when the entire herd might be tested.) • Pre-movement TB tests for a small number of animals are often charged at a sympathetic (unprofitable) rate. • Negative views about the SVS because the ‘threat’ to LVIs from lay testing.

6.3.1 Comment by ADHO Region

There are a number regions where either the LVI or SVS feedback suggests that capacity for pre-movement TB testing might be an issue. The situation for the SVS for these regions is summarised in Table 6.

Table 7: Overview of Issues in Selected ADHO Regions

ADHO region	Comment
Stafford	<p>The survey of veterinary practices indicated that the demand for pre-movement TB testing might exceed the capacity in parts of Derbyshire during the winter months. Indeed, pre-movement TB tests accounts for 50 % of test charts received by the Staffordshire ADHO. However, to date, all LVIs have been responding to demand, and no veterinary practices have returned any routine TB testing to the SVS due to capacity issues. In April 2006, a few farmers did complain that the veterinary practice that they use was unable to provide them with the pre-movement TB test. It is believed by the SVS that all these farmers were able to get a pre-movement TB test completed by another veterinary practice.</p> <p>The number of veterinary practices delivering large animal work is constant for this area. In 2006, one practice ceased large animal work, but they only had one farm client, so this is not a material issue. The Stafford ADHO region has 221 TB testing (Panel 1a) LVIs.</p>
Exeter	<p>Pre-movement TB tests accounts for 40-50 % of test charts received by Exeter ADHO, which was higher than anticipated. LVI capacity has been generally sufficient to date, partly because larger practices took on extra staff in anticipation of demand. LVI capacity, however, is always temporarily exceeded in Spring (March and April), with the rush on tests before turnout, and pre-movement TB tests have added to this demand. On occasions, farmers have had to get an LVI from other than their usual practice.</p> <p>The region has one large animal practice that does no routine or breakdown tests but does do pre-movement TB testing. About six other practices return a few TB tests to the SVS when they do not have capacity. These are usually from short interval testing and they are from practices that have a lot of herds under restrictions, and hence do a lot of short interval tests. The Devon ADHO also picks up a few welfare cases and overdue testing, which can be due to capacity or because the farmer is not paying bills.</p> <p>In 2006, one large practice, which serviced quite a large area of West Devon, ceased large animal work. The surrounding practices were also large and have absorbed the clients between them, and taken on extra veterinarians. Another practice, with one LVI, has virtually ceased but this has also been absorbed by another practice. Another decided to cease large animal work, but then when clients started to move to other practices, they changed their decision. The Exeter ADHO region has 219 TB testing (Panel 1a) LVIs.</p>
Leicester	<p>There is some indication that LVIs in some regions are overworked with the current exemptions. There could be capacity issues when the younger testing is introduced.</p> <p>The amount of pre-movement TB testing carried out within the counties within Leicester ADHO region varies considerably. There are a number of high-risk areas within the region, such as along the Gloucestershire boarder. The Leicester ADHO region currently has sufficient LVI capacity, although the number of large animal veterinary practices is reducing. Existing practices are taking on new LVIs and some of the practices that have remained the same size for years are now looking to grow</p> <p>In the Leicester ADHO region, there are 29 Large Animal Practices with 149 TB testing (Panel 1a) LVIs. The region lost three practices for large animal work in 2006, with two others reducing their large animal workload to 6 farms (the minimum allowed to retain their LVI status for TB testing). To date (November 2006), the Leicester ADHO has had 210 tests returned to SVS Veterinary Offices, including some small tests e.g. IR re-tests.</p>

ADHO region	Comment
Newcastle	<p>Although a few LVIs stated that they might have capacity issues in the future, to date, the Newcastle ADHO has not had any routine TB testing work returned, with the exception of the occasional test where LVIs have been unable to persuade farmers to co-operate with testing. There have not been any returns due to the capacity of veterinary practices being exceeded.</p> <p>For the year 2005/06, SVS staff completed 139 tracings (and a handful of inconclusive reactors), with tests usually numbering a small number of animals. These are visits that have not been previously allocated to LVIs and thus do not represent returned work.</p> <p>In the Newcastle ADHO region pre-movement TB Testing is carried out routinely by approximately 23 LVI practices with 88 TB testing (Panel 1a) LVIs. In 2006, one veterinary practice stopped doing large animal work. Two practices are currently having discussions with the SVS about starting large animal work</p>
Gloucester	<p>There have been farmers in the Gloucester ADHO region who have gone overdue on their routine tests because their LVI practice has had to cancel their test due to staff shortages. However, this cannot be verified as attributed to the demand of pre-movement testing.</p> <p>In March 2007, the SVS expects that demand for pre-movement TB testing will rise considerably within the Gloucester ADHO region, and smaller practices might struggle to satisfy demand. There are twenty approved finishing units in the region, which will help reduce demand for pre-movement TB testing.</p> <p>In 2006, one practice in Wiltshire ceased large animal work. In the second half of 2005, two other practices (in the Bristol area and Gloucestershire) ceased large animal work. Since April 2006, the Gloucester ADHO region has 9 less TB testing (Panel 1a) LVIs; there are currently 88 TB testing LVIs.</p>

7.0 Willingness

Veterinary practices nearly all stated that they were happy to continue carrying out pre-movement TB Testing. Only a couple of practices interviewed planned to give up large animal work. LVIs stated the benefits to them of pre-movement TB testing to be:

- Direct income (this was seen as particularly important in regions suffering from declining dairy herd size).
- The chance to get onto farms (in other than an emergency situation).
- Economies of scale (without pre-movement TB testing practices would be smaller, making organising cover and rotas more difficult).

Some LVIs saw pre-movement TB testing as essential for the continuation of their practice. They stated that if pre-movement TB testing was given to lay testers, that they would need to make veterinarians redundant, and that pre-movement TB testing was essential for the supporting of the current number of large animal LVIs.

During the March survey, there was a concern expressed by some LVIs that pre-movement testing would not be popular with the farmers and that this could affect the relationship with their clients. During the current survey, only one LVI reported that their relationship with their clients had been affected.

If TB testing is used as a long-term method for the control of TB, it is possible that a significant number of LVIs might leave large animal work and new graduates will be reluctant to do large animal work. A number of veterinary practices suggested that junior LVIs were unhappy with the amount of TB testing they were required to do but were willing (for now) to carry on with this work. However, it was suggested that after a couple of years junior LVIs might switch to small animal work to avoid TB testing.

The following LVI quotes illustrate the different views given during interviews:

Positive comments

- “With the slowing decline in dairy farming and the end of slaughter certificates, the introduction of TB pre-movement testing has kept our overall work load fairly constant.”
- “Pre-movement TB testing is the only opportunity, other than routine testing, to get onto the farm for more than an emergency situation. It can then cover other disease issues.”
- “Pre-movement TB testing is a good source of income. Not silly enough to refuse work particularly with people leaving farming. Although they might not enjoy it, or the paperwork, they will do it.”
- “It (pre-movement TB testing) allows us to employ enough staff for a good rota and time off, we will appreciate the work. And it gets us on to farms, which is excellent for us and farm welfare.”

Negative comments

- “If this is a permanent policy, LVIs will stop doing it. They will think in terms of months at the moment and this is the government policy there will be problem, as people have already talk about moving, and we only do 40% large animal. If the long term strategic is PrMT then there will be a long-term capacity problem as LVIs look to become small animals vets. We need the work for large animal work, but it is not why we became Vets. The work is mindless and the junior staff would not want to do it in the long term.”
- “Young animals that take time. The crush does not fit them. After 9 to 11 months, the animals can't fit in side by side. We will return dangerous work to the SVS”.

Appendix 1: Veterinary Practice Survey Form

Name of Practice		Telephone	
Name of Contact		Position	
County & ADHO			
Number of large animal vets (at the practice)		Number on Panel 1 (a)	

1. Current Situation

Capacity

Q-CC1. Has demand to date for pre-movement testing been as expected?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC2. Have you been able to service demand for TB Testing (Post 27 March 2006)?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC3. Do you know of any farmers that were not able to move cattle because they could not arrange a pre-movement TB test in time? How many?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC4. Was there a rush in June as farms got their free test completed? (the UK Government offered to pay for one pre-movement test between 20 February and 30 June 2006, with a€3,000 maximum ceiling).

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC5. Have you attempted to recruit more staff to meet any increased demand, and if so, has this been possible?

Yes / No / Don't know

Preparedness

Q-CP1. Were you prepared for the introduction of pre-movement TB testing in March?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CP2. Did you have enough information about pre-movement testing when it was first introduced? How would you rate the quality of the information provided?

Yes / No / Don't know Excellent/good/adequate/poor

Q-CP3. Is there any thing that could have been done better to help you prepare?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CP4. Have you been clear when to record a test as a pre-movement test as opposed to a private test?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CP5. Has introduction of the policy affected your relationship with your customers? If so, how?

Yes / No / Don't know

Pricing

Q-CR1. On what basis do you cost?

Visit charges/Per head?/By the hour? – Would not say

Q-CR2. What are the charges?

Q-CR3. What would your standard charge (assuming average travelling) be for TB testing the following group sizes

1 animal

25 animals

100 animals

250 animals

Compliance

Q-CO1. Do you know of any cattle that were inappropriately moved without a pre-movement TB Test?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CO2. If so, were these cattle movements made as a result of a lack of knowledge by the farmer or attempts to get around the system?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CO3. Based on your experience, what would be your assessment be of compliance with pre-movement testing rules?

30%

60%

90%

Other

Farmer behaviour

Q-CF1. To what degree have farmers been co-ordinating routine herd tests with the planned movement of cattle?

Q-CF2. To what extent have farmers stopped taking individual animals/small groups to market? Have farmers been moving more cattle under 15 months of age so as to avoid pre-movement testing?

Q-CF3. To what extent has the requirement for pre-movement testing reduced the purchase of cattle from regions with relatively high incidences of TB in Cattle? [or increased farmer awareness of the value of checking the TB status of purchased animals?]

A little/somewhat/a lot

2. Post March 2007

Awareness

Q- PA1. Are you aware of the changes in age exemptions of pre-movement TB testing of cattle due next year? (answer: in March 2007 pre-movement testing will be extended to movements of cattle over 42 days old.)

Knows the date?

Capacity

Q-PC1. Do you expect to see a significant increase in demand? If so, how large?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC2. Do you expect to be able to meet the increased demand for TB pre-movement testing?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC3. Have you made any preparations for the increase in demand for TB pre-movement testing, such as recruitment?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC4.

A. Do you have any spare capacity for the increase in pre-movement TB tests? **B.** Will these tests mean that other work does not get done? How will this affect your practice?

A.

B.

Q-PC5. Do you envisage any periods where demand may outstrip supply?

Large degree / Small degree / Don't know

Q-PC6. Do know of any Practices that will not have sufficient capacity to meet demand for TB pre-movement testing?

Yes/ No/Don't know

Q-PC7. What additional advice/guidance will you need from Defra or the SVS in relation to extending pre-movement testing to all cattle over 6 weeks old?

Willingness

Q-PW1. Will your practice continue to carry out pre-movement TB testing? How will it affect the business?

Yes/ No/ Don't know

Q-PW2. Could the routine nature of this work lead this type of work being turned down? (any details)

Yes/ No / Don't know

Q-PW3. Do you see the system as workable?

Yes/ No / Don't know

Q-PW4. Do you see the system as worthwhile as a means of reducing the risk of spread of TB through cattle movements?

/ No / Don't know

Pricing

Q-PR1. Will you change the basis of your costing given the increased demand for pre-movement testing?

Q-PR2. Will prices go up by much next year?

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

Appendix 2: Divisional Veterinary Manager Survey Form

Name of Region		Telephone	
Name of DVM			

1. Current

Capacity

Q-CC1. Was demand for pre-movement testing as expected?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC2. Do you know of any farmers that were not able to move cattle because they could not get a LVI to complete a test?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC3. Is there sufficient LVIs capacity in your region for pre-movement TB tests?

Q-CC4. Were there any periods when you had concerns that LVI capacity might be exceeded?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC5. Were there any periods when LVI capacity was exceeded?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC6. Was there a rush in June as farms got their free test completed? (the UK Government offered to pay for one pre-movement test between 20 February and 30 June 2006, with a€3,000 maximum ceiling).

Yes / No / Don't know

Q- CC7. Is there any part of your region without an LVI within 'reasonable distance', such that testing can not always be arranged by the Farmer?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CC8. Have any Veterinary practices in your region ceased to do large animal work in the last year?

Yes / No / Don't know

Willingness

Q-W1. Have you detected any reluctance from the LVIs in your region to carry our pre-movement TB testing?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-W2. Is there any thing that could have been done better to help LVIs prepare?

Yes / No / Don't know

Compliance

Q-CO1. Do you know of any cattle movements that were inappropriately moved without a pre-movement TB Test? If so, please provide details.

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-CO2. If so, were these cattle movements made as a result of a lack of knowledge by the farmer or attempts to get around the system?

Yes / No / Don't know

Farmer behaviour

Q-CF1. To what degree have farmers been co-ordinating routine herd tests with the planned movement of cattle?

Q-CF2. To what extent have farmers stopped taking individual animals/small groups to market?

Q-CF3. To what extent has the requirement for pre-movement testing reduced the purchase of cattle from regions with relatively high incidences of TB in Cattle?

Yes / No / Don't know

2. Post March 2007

Awareness

Q- PA1. How aware are LVIs in your region of the forthcoming (March 2007) changes to the age exemption for pre-movement TB testing of cattle?

Completely / Very aware/ Some what/ Not aware

Q- PA2. How aware are the livestock farmers of the forthcoming changes to the age exemption for pre-movement TB testing of cattle?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q- PA3.

How aware are the staff within your AHDO of the forthcoming changes to the age exemption for pre-movement testing?

Yes / No / Don't know

Capacity

Q- PC1. Will your region have sufficient LVI capacity for pre-movement TB testing post March 2007?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC2. Do you expect any periods when LVI capacity for pre-movement TB testing might be exceeded?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC3. If demand for pre-movement TB testing does exceed LVI capacity, do you have any contingency plans?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC4. Have any Veterinary practices in your region indicated that they will cease large animal work in the coming 12 months?

Yes / No / Don't know

Q-PC5. What is the availability of approved finishing units in your region for cattle not pre-movement tested?

Limited/ good

Q-PC6. Have you been encouraging uptake of exempt finishing units?

Yes /no
If no, why not?

Farmer behaviour

Q-PF1. Will the forthcoming changes to the age exemption for pre-movement TB testing of cattle result in additional changes to farmer behaviour?

Yes / No / Don't know

Willingness

Q-PW1. Will the LVIs in your region be willing to meet all requests for pre-movement TB testing?

Yes / No / Don't know

Do you think the pre-movement testing policy is worthwhile as part of the TB surveillance and control regime?

Yes / No / Don't know

ANY OTHER COMMENTS?

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DNV
Veritasveien 1
N-1322 Hovik
Norway
Phone: +47 67 57 99 00

DNV
Johan Berentsenvei
109-111
N-5020 Bergen
Norway
Phone: +47 55 94 36 00

DNV
Bjergstedveien 1
N-4002 Stavanger
Norway
Phone: +47 51 50 60 00

DNV
Ingvald Ystgaardsvei 15
N-7496 Trondheim
Norway
Phone: +47 73 90 3500

DNV
Businesspark
Essen - Nord
Schnieringshof 14
45329 Essen
Germany
Phone: +49 201 7296 412

DNV
Duboisstraat 39 – Bus 1
B-2060 Antwerp
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0) 3 206 65 40

DNV
Palace House
3 Cathedral Street
London SE1 9DE
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 20 7357 6080

DNV
Highbank House
Exchange Street
Stockport
Cheshire SK3 0ET
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 161 477 3818

DNV
Cromarty House
67-72 Regent Quay
Aberdeen AB11 5AR
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 1224 335000

DNV
16340 Park Ten Place
Suite 100
Houston, TX 77084
USA
Phone: +1 281 721 6600

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