



### Have a plan in place in case a TB outbreak does occur:

- Ideally, it would be useful for the home farm to select contract rearing herds that have contingencies in place for managing the milking and feeding of replacement heifers in the event that they cannot return to the home farm at calving; in practice this may be difficult. In exceptional circumstances where there is a serious concern about animal welfare, it may be possible for heifers to return under licence to the dairy herd during a restriction of the rearing herd, subject to a full risk mitigation plan and close DAFM oversight; however if this is permitted then the dairy herd would also be TB restricted immediately.
- Consider moving forward your herd test date to a time in the year that allows for reactor retests prior to the scheduled return of the contract heifers to the home farm.
- Consider in advance how you would manage this situation if it did occur, including plans to manage male calves which cannot be moved off the farm during a TB restriction.
- Compensation for TB reactors is paid to the herd owner of the herd number in which the reactors were kept. The contract should address this and how it would be resolved between the contract rearer and the dairy herd owner.

Further information is available at

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrol/bovinetb/>



**Contract rearing and bovine TB:**  
**How can the risks be reduced?**



This leaflet is for any farmer engaged in contract rearing of dairy heifers. An outbreak of bovine TB could cause severe disruption to a contract rearing arrangement – read this to learn how to reduce and manage that risk.

### The risk: what would a TB outbreak mean for the arrangement?

#### TB restriction in the Main Dairy Cow Herd

- The herd will be restricted until it has two clear TB tests. Cattle cannot be moved into the herd until it has had one clear TB test
- Heifers which have moved into the contract rearing herd may be subject to a forward-trace test; if they test positive, the contract rearing herd in which they reside would be restricted too.
- If the home farm becomes restricted then the contract reared dairy heifers cannot return to the main herd until at least one clear test is completed in that herd. The heifers may then be moved back under permit. The farmer loses all rights to income supplement, hardship grants and reactor grants for animals that return to the main herd during the restriction if those animals become reactors during that breakdown.
- Movements of bovines from or to TB restricted herds can only take place in line with permits issued by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM).  
This may pose a serious problem if the main dairy herd becomes restricted shortly before the calving period. The replacement heifers cannot return to the main herd until one clear test in the main dairy herd.
- Farmers would need to have [contingencies in place for the milking and feeding of the heifers until the main herd has completed one clear test](#).

#### TB restriction in the Contract Rearing Herd

- The contract rearing herd will be restricted until it has two clear TB tests. Cattle cannot move to another herd while it is restricted.
- Restrictions in the contract rearing herd would therefore prevent return of the heifers to the main herd and can cause particular problems if the restriction is in place at calving time.
- If heifers have recently returned back to the main herd prior to the TB breakdown in the rearing herd, they may be subject to a forward-trace test; if they test positive, the dairy herd in which they reside would be restricted too.



### Reducing the risk: How can I protect my heifers from TB?

- Contract rearing arrangements where only one dairy herd sends cattle to the rearing herd are lower risk. If a contract rearer takes in heifers from more than one herd, the risk is higher.
- Ask about the TB history of the contract rearing herd – if there has been a recent outbreak of TB, there is a higher risk that there will be a repeat breakdown. It is safer to use a rearer with a clear TB history.
- Reduce the risk from badgers in both the dairy herd and the contract rearing herd:
  - If badger setts or latrines are present on grazing land, you should fence them off with electric fencing.
  - Do not feed cattle concentrates spread on the ground.
  - Feed cattle in raised troughs. Avoid spilling feed on the ground, as badgers may consume it and contaminate any leftovers.
  - Use raised drinking troughs.
  - Badger-proof farm buildings by covering the lower part of access gates to sheds so they can't get through.
- Reduce the risk of local TB spread: ensure there is good fencing and no nose-to-nose contact with neighbouring cattle is possible.
- Reduce the risk of residual infection: any animals in the dairy or contract rearing herd which previously ever tested inconclusive on a TB test should be culled.
- Reduce the risk of TB coming in: biosecurity in both herds is critically important – ask yourself what systems can you put in place in both herds to stop TB and other diseases entering the farms?
- If the main dairy herd has a history of TB breakdowns, the farmer needs to carefully consider the risks of outsourcing the rearing of replacement heifers. (There is a 30% risk of recurrence of TB infection in herds within three years of derestriction from the last outbreak.)
- When choosing a bull, select one with greater genetic resistance to TB – use the ICBF TB traffic light system and breed heifers which will resist infection.