



The British Alpaca Society

Bovine Tuberculosis Current Policy

The Board of the Society would like to remind its members that the Society is not a legislative body. DEFRA in England, the Welsh Assembly in Wales and the Scottish Executive in Scotland are the legislative bodies. The Board would also like to remind its members that for as long as camelids remain officially unrecognised as agricultural livestock, the Society can only ever be an advisory body to the membership and the legislative bodies.

The recommendations published by the Society for its members are based on current knowledge and best practice. The Board, its committees and their advisors are monitoring the situation as closely as possible and will keep the membership informed of any further developments. As such, we would remind members that this is a serious issue. The official figures recorded by the VLA would indicate that the numbers affected are, at present, small and the majority are localised within the ever-expanding hotspot areas for Bovine TB. However, we have been advised that due to freedom of movement that camelids have enjoyed for a considerable time, and a relatively long incubation period for bovine Tb in camelids, there is always the possibility that this disease may have already spread through the National Herd.

To date, there is no official factual evidence that this is the case but we would urge all camelid owners in all parts of the UK to be extremely vigilant in monitoring their animals and to rigorously apply the necessary protocols to protect their own herds and those of others.

We ask all our members to recognise that we can have very little influence on government policy regarding the wildlife vectors but we can put our own house in order with regard the camelid vectors and we would urge all camelid owners to do so ASAP and to recognise that we all have a duty of care and responsibility towards every camelid owner and every livestock farmer in the country.

The British Alpaca Society is currently working closely with the Welsh Assembly in developing protocols for the control of TB in the alpaca population of Wales and is keen to develop a proactive working dialogue with the Animal Health and DEFRA bodies dealing with the control and eradication of TB in England. The BAS will offer full support to any government initiatives which are focused on controlling and eradicating Bovine TB. Scotland has been granted EU recognition as a 'TB Free' area. It is not yet clear how this will affect camelid movements into Scotland.

The British Alpaca Society is in constant consultation with the BVCS (British Veterinary Camelid Society) which is monitoring and advising the Welfare Committee of the Society and the Board on establishing protocols and procedures for the protection of members' alpacas from the spread of TB.

Having researched and discussed the current TB issues at great length with affected members, Veterinarians, BVCS, DEFRA, Animal Health, the joint BAS/BCL Welfare committee, BAS Show Committee and Show Organisers Committee, the Board of the Society makes the following recommendations to its members regarding TB.

The British Alpaca Society recommends to all its members that they cooperate fully with DEFRA & the Welsh Assembly in all initiatives focused on controlling and eradicating Bovine TB.

The British Alpaca Society recommends that in spite of the fact that alpacas are not officially recognised as agricultural livestock, we responsibly implement and adhere to all protocols relating to disease control.

The British Alpaca Society recommends that, as a matter of course, if they are not already doing so, all its members should keep detailed movement records for all alpacas moving on or off farm for whatever reason.

The British Alpaca Society urges all its members to carry out an official post mortem for all alpaca deaths from unknown causes which occur in their herds.

The British Alpaca Society urges all its members to enter into the established Animal Health testing regime once an alpaca on their holding has been identified as carrying TB or having died as a result of TB.

The British Alpaca Society considers it inconsiderate and irresponsible behaviour for members to refuse to test once under restriction for TB.

The British Alpaca Society considers that any member who suspects that an alpaca on their holding may have TB and decides not to acknowledge the fact or carry out an official post mortem is acting to the detriment of all its members. If this is proven to be the case then the Society would ask for this member to be expelled immediately.

The British Alpaca Society considers that all members who are under suspicion of or restriction for TB have a duty to inform all owners their animals have been in direct contact with over the past year of their situation to enable them to initiate their own safeguards.

The British Alpaca Society recommends that members apply a thorough risk assessment in relation to all alpaca contacts and movements. This should include reference to the published map of DEFRA high cattle parish testing areas.

The British Alpaca Society recognises that the current officially licensed skin test for Bovine TB for camelids can produce false negative results and therefore does not provide a guarantee of health. Acknowledging this fact, it would ask all its members to consider implementing a 'belt and braces' approach with regard to biosecurity at all times.

We remind our members that the current skin test is the only test licensed by DEFRA and the EU for use on camelids. BAS, BLS, BCL and the BVCS are currently exploring with Animal Health and DEFRA all avenues towards developing viable alternatives. **NB: This is a process that will be ongoing but is not an initiative that can have a direct bearing on the current situation.**

In the case of Shows the British Alpaca Society would recommend that all show organisers conduct a thorough risk assessment of their proposed event and insist on strict adherence to all biosecurity protocols.

Consideration might be given to:

- a) The movement of alpacas from High Risk Areas
- c) Increased separation between pens
- d) Enlargement of holding pens and show rings to allow for clear separation of exhibitors
- e) Prohibiting exhibitors entering other pens
- f) Prohibiting the general public from direct contact with the alpacas
- g) Prohibiting alpacas being walked outside of the alpaca areas
- h) Restriction of the number of entries to allow **for more spacious penning**
- b) The use of pre show skin testing.

The British Alpaca Society would ask all members to be extremely vigilant and apply a thorough risk assessment when considering purchases, hire of breeding males, accepting visiting females, utilising 'mobile mating' and attendance at shows. Please consider where the alpaca is from and determine how many farms it has visited; when it was last tested for TB; how far it has travelled; whether it is from a high risk area. Are the assurances given and records available for inspection sufficient for you to warrant the risks involved?

The British Alpaca Society recommends all members to apply due diligence with all camelid-to-camelid contact for the foreseeable future. Transparency of information, detailed movement records, traceability of movement, the existence of biosecurity protocols and subsequent on-farm quarantine must be considered key factors in protecting your existing herd.

The British Alpaca Society recognises that facts are the only commodity on which we can base our fight against this disease and we urge any member contacted by the media to give their opinion on the emotive subject of TB to immediately refer the matter to the Welfare Committee of the Society who are in touch with the current situation and equipped to keep the issues in perspective.

The British Alpaca Society recommends its members to read thoroughly the BAS Code of Conduct regarding Biosecurity and Tuberculosis, and the FAQs on TB, available on the BAS website. Should any members require urgent information regarding this issue then they should contact the welfare officers: welfare@bas-uk.com

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