

Btb advice from Cornwall Camelid Association
and Cornwall Btb Eradication Group 2021

Bovine Tuberculosis is a zoonotic disease i.e., one that can infect people as well as animals. BTB is spread from species to species. Fortunately, such cases are rare in people nowadays thanks to vaccination. The South West is in a high-risk area for Bovine TB so alpacas and other South American Camelids are susceptible to infection. The following is advice and recommendations to follow.

Infections in camelids are thought to be spillover infections from infected wildlife and cattle, but infection can also be acquired from other camelids that they are in contact with. Signs in camelids are variable and can include weight loss and respiratory disease– but disease can become generalised and affect other organs, e.g., liver, kidney, udder etc. Some show no signs at all until the disease is very advanced.

Introducing new camelids to your holding:

- ▣ **Premovement test animals before moving (APHA permission is required)**
- ▣ **Question owner/breeder re history of TB on their holding and their testing regime and bio-security.**

If your animals are adjacent to a farm with a bovine breakdown you will be required to have a contiguous TB test on your camelids. You will be contacted by APHA, so it is helpful if you let local farmers know you have camelids in case, they have a BTB breakdown. There are protocols agreed between APHA and BAS for the testing. There is no legal requirement to register movements and notify APHA that you own camelids but we recommend that you keep up to date records of all movements off. It is important that you are registered with a veterinary practice. If you need advice ask one of the CCA welfare officers, Sandra Muriel, Mark Norman, Nigel Retallack or Wendy Scott.

What can you do to reduce the risk of your camelids acquiring bTB.

Visitors and PPE– ensure facilities are clean and disinfect- like Covid –19, it can be spread by aerosols so wash hands, clean boots and vehicles. When handling your alpacas, point the nose away from your face. Consider wearing protective clothing especially if handling sick or recently acquired camelids. If TB is suspected, disinfectants like FAM 30 at a 5% concentration or Virkon LSP at 1 part to 15 parts water can be used.

Fencing - sheep netting will not keep badgers the main wildlife vector of TB out but if they are going underneath, you will see runs. Ensure that no nose-to-nose contact with neighbouring livestock. The TB Hub www.tbhub.co.uk has some excellent information leaflets on its website about the efficacy of different fencing.

Food and water troughs to reduce exposure to infected wildlife and their secretions ensure troughs are at least 100 cm from the ground and have sheer sides. Use feed stores to reduce rodents etc. as well as badgers contacting feed and contaminating it use secure metal or plastic bins with lids. Remove any uneaten food from the troughs.

Isolation facilities, if you already own camelids and have purchased a new camelid, if you are able to, have a secure area for it to be housed and grazed for 4 weeks after arrival, to reduce not just the risk of TB but parasitic disease too. Pick up faeces and ensure it is stored away from other camelids and that wildlife cannot access it.

Wildlife cameras– these are useful to see if any wildlife are accessing feed stores, shelters, yards etc. If you see them entering buildings then you can take measures to exclude them again there is some useful tips on the TB Hub website.

Water sources, be aware if wildlife can access these, they could can contaminate it, also if they have passed through other farmland the water could be contaminated especially after slurry spreading. Consider fencing off and using water troughs.

Vaccination– currently we are unable to vaccinate camelids against TB as it interferes with the diagnostic tests used. In certain areas of Cornwall there are projects taking place to vaccinate badgers, which has shown to reduce the reduce the level of disease in that species– contact the Cornwall Wildlife Trust- info@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk