



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 15/26

Mandatory Interferon-gamma (IFN- γ) blood testing extended to the six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area of England

Date issued: 21 April 2026

Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs), Authorised Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) and OV practices delivering TB skin testing in England that, from 1 July 2026, APHA will be extending mandatory government funded interferon-gamma (IFN- γ) TB blood testing to all breakdowns located in the six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area that become Officially Tuberculosis Free Status Withdrawn (OTFW).

Background

1. The IFN- γ TB blood test is a supplementary blood test conducted in TB breakdown herds alongside the tuberculin skin test to increase sensitivity. IFN- γ testing is an integral part of the government's strategy to achieve officially TB free status for England by 2038.
2. In England, IFN- γ testing is currently compulsory in the following cases:
 - a. **all new** Officially Tuberculosis Free Withdrawn (OTFW) TB breakdowns in the **Low Risk Area (LRA)** and **annual** surveillance testing parts of the **Edge Area**
 - b. **recurrent** OTFW TB breakdowns in the **HRA** and **six-monthly** surveillance testing parts of the **Edge Area**
 - c. herds experiencing **chronic** or **persistent** OTFW breakdowns

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

- d. to inform decisions on **whole or partial slaughter** of TB breakdown herds and to assess any remaining animals
 - e. other **ad-hoc** scenarios in breakdown herds where APHA considers there is merit in IFN-y test deployment.
3. Since September 2025, IFN-y testing is also offered on **voluntary** basis to cattle keepers of OTFW breakdown herds in the HRA and six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area who do not qualify for compulsory IFN-y testing, subject to certain conditions.
 4. **Private** IFN-y testing is also available in England, subject to authorisation by APHA.

What's changing?

1. From 1 July 2026, APHA is extending **compulsory** government funded IFN-y testing to cattle keepers of breakdown herds that become OTFW and are located in the **six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area**.
2. From the above date, APHA will instruct and arrange IFN-y testing in OTFW breakdown herds in the six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area.
3. Herds within the six-monthly surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area with breakdowns that become OTFW before 1st July will still be eligible for a voluntary, government-funded IFN-y tests along with those in the HRA which are not currently eligible for compulsory IFN-y testing (please refer to [Briefing Note 32/25: Voluntary Interferon-gamma \(IFN-y\) blood testing in England](#) issued in August 2025).
4. The [private IFN-y testing](#) option remains available to cattle keepers in England.

Action and Further Information

1. OVs and ATTs are encouraged to inform cattle keepers of these changes and point them to the information about IFN-y blood testing available on the [TB Hub website](#), which will be updated in due course.