



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 24/26

Revised instructions on the storage and use of tuberculin

Date issued: 20 August 2026

Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) of the revised instructions on the storage and management of tuberculin vials once they have been removed from refrigerated storage at veterinary practices.
2. To remind OVs and ATTs that only tuberculin vials that have been correctly stored, including within the stated temperature range, should be used when performing TB skin tests.

Background

3. During previous Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) audits, issues relating to the correct storage of tuberculin in vehicles have been identified.
4. The [Tuberculin Data Sheet](#) specifies:

6.4 Special precautions for storage

Store in a refrigerator (2°C - 8°C). Do not freeze.

Keep the vials in the polystyrene box, closed with carton sleeve, in order to protect from light.

Transportation:

May be transported at **2°C - 37°C** for a period not longer than 14 days. Do not freeze.

Keep the vials in the polystyrene box, closed with carton sleeve, in order to protect from light.

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5. The 14 days period for which tuberculin can be kept between 2°C and 37°C is cumulative (i.e. it does not restart every time the tuberculin is placed in the fridge between 2°C and 8°C).
6. According to the manufacturer, there is a possible reduction in potency of tuberculin due to temperature/time abuse and if the product is removed from and returned to a fridge more than three times.
7. There is an unbroken refrigeration chain between the manufacturers and the APHA Weybridge stores. This means the first refrigeration break begins when tuberculin leaves Weybridge for delivery to veterinary practices and APHA offices.
8. Currently, APHA instructions require TB testers to take the tuberculin out of storage only on the day it is going to be used, with unused vials disposed of at the end of the day.

What is changing?

9. To allow for greater efficiencies and reduce tuberculin wastage, APHA instructions are being revised. OV and ATTs are now permitted to remove tuberculin vials from the practice fridge and, provided the vials are correctly stored in vehicles, transported for a maximum of seven days. During these seven days, the vials must not be returned to the practice fridge store. After the seven days have expired, vials must be correctly disposed of.
10. This revision to the instructions is subject to compliance with the following requirements:
 - a) **OV practices must:**
 - keep records of the date each tuberculin vial is removed from the practice fridge store and ensure all vials have the removal date readily identifiable (e.g. written on the tuberculin box).
 - have a written standard operating procedure (SOP) in place. The SOP must include:
 - records clearly indicating that tuberculin was stored at the correct temperature at the practice fridge store before removal,
 - details of the procedure and equipment, including vehicle storage equipment, required to keep tuberculin vials within the correct temperature range (between 2°C and 37°C) for up to seven days after removal from the practice fridge store,

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- records that demonstrate compliance with both temperature and time requirements once removed from the practice fridge store,
- the actions to be taken should temperatures fluctuate outside the recommended range or if the maximum time out of the practice fridge store is exceeded.
- Keep records demonstrating that tuberculin vials have been stored at the practice within the required temperature range (between 2°C and 8°C).

b) Individual OV's and ATT's must:

- record the date each individual vial is removed from the practice fridge store and ensure all vials have the removal date readily identifiable (e.g. written on the tuberculin box or vial),
- have an auditable temperature monitoring system in the vehicle. This may include an electronic data logger or a maximum/minimum thermometer which records and displays temperature data,
- before removing and using any tuberculin, be able to confirm via records, that tuberculin has remained within the required temperature range (between 2°C and 37°C) during storage in or out of the vehicle,
- only remove from the vehicle storage the amount of tuberculin required for the test, as repeated movement into and out of the fridge may affect the potency of tuberculin,
- keep records of any tuberculin destroyed because recorded temperatures indicate a fluctuation outside the permitted range, or if the maximum time out of the practice storage is exceeded.

11. The practice SOP and practice and individual OV/ATT records must be readily available during a practice inspection, or during an audit of an OV or ATT conducted by APHA, Veterinary Delivery Partners (VDP) or the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

12. The following requirements **must continue to be complied with** after completion of a TB skin test:

- If testing cattle, goats, pigs or sheep, the McIntock guns should be emptied at the end of the day
- If testing camelids and deer, dispose of any excess tuberculin and disposable syringes as pharmaceutical waste at the end of the day
- Once opened, tuberculin should be used within the working day
- It is not permissible to use opened tuberculin vials on more than one farm premises on the same day

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Further Information

13. The OV and ATT TB skin testing instructions and TR586 - Tuberculin skin test audit: Minimum requirements will be updated shortly.
14. OV practices delivering TB testing in England and Wales under one of the VDPs should address any queries to the relevant VDP in the first instance who will collate and escalate to APHA as necessary.
15. Non-VDP OVs in England should complete the online contact form at gov.uk for any queries: <https://submit-form-to-defra.service.gov.uk/form/get-help-with-tb/get-help-with-tb>.
16. OVs in Scotland should refer any queries to ScotlandEndemics@apha.gov.uk.