



MYCOPLASMA BOVIS



Myth-busting

Many farmers are going through a challenging time with the *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak. Unfortunately, their stress and anxiety is being compounded by some misinformation. Here we dispel some of those myths:

Myth 1: *Mycoplasma bovis* has been in New Zealand since around 2004

All of the available research, as well as data collated during on-farm investigations, indicate that *Mycoplasma bovis* is likely to have arrived in New Zealand in late 2015 to early 2016. Although investigations are ongoing, two pieces of evidence give us confidence about that:

- We have compared the mutations in the DNA of *Mycoplasma bovis* from individual infected properties and time sequenced that backwards, based on its mutation rate. This indicates the New Zealand strain probably entered the country in late 2015 or early 2016.
- Since we discovered *Mycoplasma bovis* in New Zealand in July 2017, we have gene sequenced the bacteria from different farms to compare genetic fingerprints. There is only one strain of *Mycoplasma bovis* in New Zealand.

It is possible new evidence will come to light. But right now, all of the evidence points to a likely entry date of late 2015 to early 2016 and there is no evidence of an earlier incursion.

Myth 2: The Government will move to long-term management

The Government, alongside industry partners, remains highly committed to eradicating *Mycoplasma bovis*, as the Prime Minister reiterated during her visit to a farm in the Wairarapa on 9 October.

The nature of phased eradication means we will work closely with affected farmers to cull infected cattle at a time that suits them. This means that in the vast majority of situations we will allow farmers to milk through the milking season or bring cattle up to required weight before processing.

There will be times where this is not possible; for instance, when we have animal welfare concerns.

In the meantime, farmers can be confident that the response is focused squarely on phased eradication, backed by the Government's \$886 million investment to achieve this goal.

Myth 3: *Mycoplasma bovis* can survive in soil leading to reinfection

There is no international scientific evidence that *Mycoplasma bovis* survives in soil and, as a result, it is not a risk pathway of concern. The primary risk pathways are cattle-to-cattle contact or contaminated milk.

MPI has not seen any evidence that corroborates claims that soil conditions have a bearing on the current *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak in New Zealand. Recent claims that they do have no scientific basis.

Myth 4: *Mycoplasma bovis* is transmittable between species

Mycoplasma bovis is specific to cattle and there is no health risk to humans or other species.

There is a very low risk of it being spread via other animals or humans and via farm equipment. But providing farmers take sensible biosecurity precautions on their property, we are comfortable the risk is mitigated.

More questions?

Call MPI on 0800 00 83 33

Email: MBovis2017_Liaison@mpi.govt.nz

www.mpi.govt.nz/bovis

