

# Farmers: act now to get free TB vet visits

Livestock farmers in England are being encouraged to sign up for free vet visits through the TB Advisory Service (TBAS) while funding is still available.

Farmers get two free vet visits, and 500 pairs of visits remain in the current round of funding. But this is only guaranteed until September this year, said Kate Butler, Project Manager at TBAS. "TBAS also offers a free advisory telephone service. The aim is to reduce, and ultimately eliminate risks and reduce the length of, or the chance of, a TB breakdown."

TBAS has trained more than 400 vets across England to deliver the visits. During the initial visit, the vet and farmer identify the farm's TB risks and what can be done about them, explained Sarah



**Kate Butler, Project Manager, TBAS**

Tomlinson, Technical Director at TBAS. Four recommended measures are then agreed to be completed in the succeeding three to six months, before a follow-up visit to discuss progress.

"A lot of people focus on the risk from badgers, however, the risk of

cow-to-cow transmission cannot be overlooked," said Ms Tomlinson. "During these visits your adviser can discuss how to identify high-risk cows, how best to manage them, and how to reduce the risk of transmission within the herd."

Meanwhile, in Wales, a group of 15 farmers are finding tremendous support by meeting to discuss the profound impact of TB on both their livestock and their personal wellbeing. Farming Connect's Agrisgôp service, formed in May 2024, brings farmers in Pembrokeshire together to share experiences and learn how to take control in the battle against TB.

Over the past 10 months they have looked into practical changes like biosecurity measures, vaccination, voluntary culling, pasteurised

colostrum, cattle movements, and slurry management. "It's given me the confidence to change practices on my farm," explained Michael Williams, who milks 150 cows at Fagwrfran East, Puncteston. "I really felt that I am not facing TB alone, which I believe is key."



**Sarah Tomlinson, Technical Director**

## Dairy farmers' farm business income expected to increase

Dairy farmers' average farm business income (FBI) is forecast to more than double in 2024/25, to £176,000, according to Defra's annual FBI figures. A recovery in the farmgate milk price is expected to be the primary driver.

The forecast indicates an increase across all enterprises except cereal production, and follows a fall in income for most farm types in

2023/24. Generally, a 2% reduction in input costs, including fertiliser and animal feed, are expected to be a major contributing factor, while for livestock farms, firm output prices are also predicted to have a positive impact.

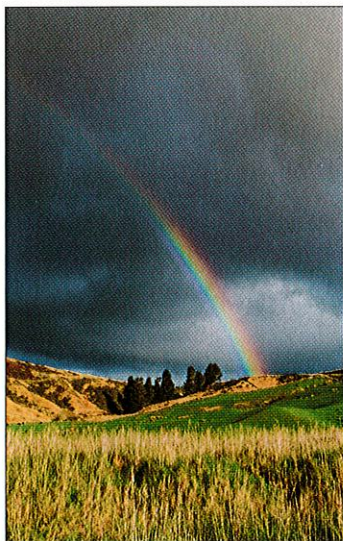
The £176,000 FBI forecast for dairy farms compares to £70,900 last year. At a UK level, the average farmgate milk price from March

2024 to January 2025 rose by around 12% compared to the previous year. Supported by tight supplies in the early part of the year, this is expected to increase output from milk by 12%.

However, Defra acknowledges the wide variation in milk prices, with some farmers receiving considerably more or less than the average.

Output from other cattle enterprises is also expected to be higher and this, along with the increase in output from milk, is predicted to more than compensate for a fall in crop output of 19%. Agri-environment income is forecast to rise by around 47% compared to 2023/24 while the delinked Basic Payment will fall by nearly a quarter.

## AHDB responds to assurance review



**Standards must be balanced**

The owners of Red Tractor should show greater and more active leadership, to help shape its future direction and organisational culture. So says the AHDB in its detailed response to the Farm Assurance Review.

Red Tractor is just one of four key areas the Board has highlighted, saying it is committed to working quickly on key recommendations. However, most will require collaborative working and time, meaning prioritisation is vital for real change.

"We recognise that some may never support the concept of assurance, but the vast majority of all parts of the supply chain will benefit from strong assurance schemes that have clear objectives, deliver value and work effectively," said AHDB Chair Nicholas Saphir.

The other three key areas which AHDB has prioritised include the role, purpose and benefits of assurance, saying collaboration with industry is vital to ensure its alignment on this.

On environmental standards, it is important that levy payers are at the table to ensure a fair balance between regulation and reward. And data will be a major area of opportunity for the industry, said the report.

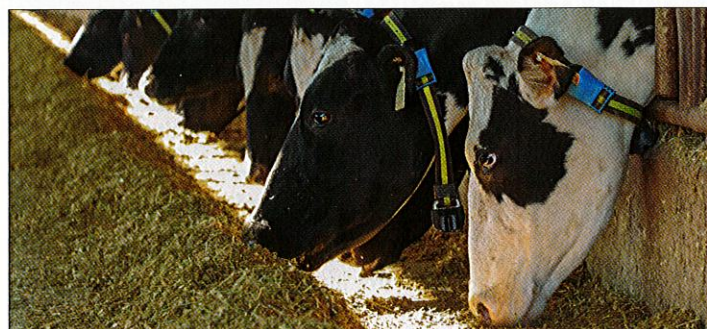
## Farmers evaluate monitoring technology

Five dairy farmers are exploring how herd monitoring technologies can deliver higher standards of animal welfare and improved production efficiency. The farms are all using SenseHub, and are working with their vets to assess their health and fertility protocols, disease and pathogen burden.

Although monitoring systems are already a key component on many farms, there is an element of misunderstanding, mistrust and hesitancy, said Helene Lanz,

Managing Director at MSD, which is running the project. "This is preventing the industry from adopting precision technologies on a truly wholesale level."

The primary objective is to demonstrate how technical solutions can help farmers make incremental improvements to herd health and performance, said MSD project lead Duncan Sinclair. "We look forward to sharing the results with the wider livestock farming community in due course."



**Herd monitoring technology can help farmers to improve cow health**