

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001370/25
to the Commission
Emma Fourreau (The Left)
(2 April 2025)**

Subject: Bovine tuberculosis and its consequences for farmers in Normandy

In 2023, a herd of 300 dairy cows in Saint-Omer, Normandy, were slaughtered after a case of tuberculosis was detected among them. In 2024, in a municipality neighbouring Calvados, a farmer saw his 150 cows slaughtered for the same reason. Farmers in the department are against the practice of ‘blanket slaughter’, which involves systematically killing the whole herd in the event of a positive test on one animal, with serious financial and psychological consequences for farmers.

The reliability of the tests is also being questioned, with professionals calling for more precise tools, in order to avoid slaughtering by mistake or because it takes too long for results to be confirmed. When a first test on an animal is positive, breeders actually have to wait several weeks to have the positive test definitively validated. In the meantime, even if the test ultimately turns out to be negative, all production (in this case of milk) must be discarded for health reasons.

Therefore, will the Commission:

1. adapt the health rules to avoid blanket slaughter and preserve farmers’ economic viability?
2. encourage research on the subject in order to develop more reliable and more accurate health tests?

Submitted: 2.4.2025

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(20 June 2025)**

EU animal health rules for the management of infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex (MTBC) in bovine animals are laid down in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/689 ⁽¹⁾.

These EU rules do not stipulate a ‘blanket slaughter’ of an entire establishment of bovine animals when one outbreak of infection with MTBC is confirmed among them.

The EU rules provide for a proportionate approach, including derogations for the movement of animals and products from infected establishments.

Implementation of those rules is the responsibility of the competent authority of the Member States. In case of confirmed outbreaks, the competent authority conducts an epidemiological enquiry and considers relevant factors to decide on the best way to deal with the situation. They have a margin of manoeuvre to choose from risk mitigating measures, including the slaughtering of animals.

Diagnostic methods for infection with MTBC are laid down in Annex III, Section 2 of the same Regulation. Only those diagnostic methods can be used, and the Member States are supported by an EU Reference Laboratory ⁽²⁾.

The EU rules are based on up-to-date scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority, are in line with the international standards ⁽³⁾, and have been duly discussed with the experts of the Member States, considering also decades of experience dealing with MTBC in the EU.

The EU has been funding research on MTBC through its successive Framework Programmes. Under the ongoing ICRADE ERA-NET ⁽⁴⁾, two projects address respectively the host/pathogen interaction and diagnosis improvement through the use of new antigens and test platforms. The Horizon Europe partnership on animal health and welfare ⁽⁵⁾ is planning research activities on bovine tuberculosis in 2025.

⁽¹⁾ These rules stem from Article 24 with further details in Articles 25-31 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/689 of 17 December 2019 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards rules for surveillance, eradication programmes, and disease-free status for certain listed and emerging diseases, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_del/2020/689/2023-10-11.

⁽²⁾ More information at <https://www.visavet.es/bovinetuberculosis/>.

⁽³⁾ Those of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH): <https://www.woah.org/en/home/>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.icrad.eu/the-second-call-of-the-era-net-icrad/>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.eupahw.eu/>.