

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

This document reports a breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, or the relevant Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Orders, to which the Code applies as if it included these orders.

1. Background information

Name of Statistical Output (including weblink to the relevant output or 'landing page')

National Statistics on the Incidence of Tuberculosis (TB) in Cattle for Great Britain
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Name and contact details of the statistical Head of Profession (Lead Official in an Arm's Length Body) submitting this report, and date of report

Peter Helm, Head of Profession for Statistics, Defra, 13 November 2013

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

1. Protocol 2 – Release Practices, Practices 7 and 8
2. Paragraphs 2 and 6(1) of the Schedule to The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008

Date of occurrence

12 November 2013

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

- The Incidence of TB in Cattle in Great Britain statistics are published monthly.
- 24-hour Pre-release Access (PRA) to the statistical release had been granted to a list of ministers and officials at the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Welsh Government (WG). This includes one Defra Press Officer, to enable press office to prepare the ministerial statement to release after publication.
- As the press officer who usually deals with the TB statistics release was away, the information was sent to a different press officer on this occasion.

- Some statistics contained within the release due to be published at 09:30 on Wednesday 13 November were accidentally released by the press officer to four Defra policy staff who have not been granted 24-hour pre-release access. This breach occurred on Tuesday 12 November at 13:25
- The breach was identified by a member of the policy team (who does have pre-release access), and reported to the lead statistician at 13:55
- The lead statistician put steps in place to restrict further circulation of the statistics and informed the Head of Profession for Statistics.

Reasons for breach

Human error. The individual in receipt of the statistics under PRA in the Defra Press Office was not aware that they should not reveal any statistics to persons not on the pre-release access list.

3. Reactions and impact (both within the producer body and outside)

- On identification of the breach, the lead statistician took immediate action to stop any further circulation of the breached statistics beyond those on the PRA list. He emailed the press officer and the 4 policy people to explain what they had done wrong and to tell them not to circulate the statistics further.
- The Head of Profession was advised at the earliest opportunity, and subsequently advised the National Statistician.
- As these are GB level statistics, the Devolved Administrations were informed.
- A public statement was issued on the Defra website at the same time as the release was published and on the ONS Publication Hub on 12 November. It was not possible to publish the statement on the Defra website on 12 November as, due to the way releases must be pre-prepared for the GOV.UK website, this would have over-written the information already setup for the release the next day.

4. Corrective actions taken to prevent reoccurrence of such a breach (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

The breach occurred as a result of human error.

The individual responsible for the error has been reminded of the conditions relating to pre-release access of official statistics. Further guidance will be provided to Press Office to reduce the risk of similar breaches occurring in future. Additional warnings will be placed on statistical releases in future if the individual in the post listed as being granted PRA has changed.

Note: we already include the names of the people linked to the roles on the published PRA list in our internal documents as a reminder of who the statistics can be sent to under these rules.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

Initial statements published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/?newquery=*Incidence+of+tb+in+cattle&lday=13&lmonth=11&lyear=2013&uday=14&umonth=11&uyear=2013&theme=Agriculture+and+Environment&source-agency=Environment%2C+Food+and+Rural+Affairs&pagetype=calendar-entry

A link to where this breach report is published on the Statistics Authority website will be provided from GOV.UK at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/statistics#corporate-procedures-and-standards>