

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

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, 17 April 2013

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2 – Release Practice 4

Date of occurrence

17 April 2013

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

- The Incidence of TB in Cattle in Great Britain statistics are published monthly. The release, which comprises of a main Statistical Notice and GB dataset (containing the historic time series) and 6 Supplementary Regional Datasets, was due to be published at 09:30 on Wednesday 17 April 2013. The release is subject to Pre-release access.
- The Statistical Notice and GB dataset went live at 09:30 but a problem with the GOV.UK website prevented publication of the supplementary datasets.

Reasons for breach

Technical error resulting in a partial release of the statistics.
This is a problem with the new single government website. Defra migrated to this on 10 April 2013.

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

- The problem with the release was identified by to the lead statistician who reported the problem to the member of staff responsible for publication of the statistics on the GOV.UK. It proved impossible to rectify the fault locally and so it was referred to the Government Digital Service (GDS) at around 10:30.
- After consideration of options, the only contingency measure available to us was to place a short statement on the GOV.UK website, at the location where the TB stats are released. This flagged- up the problem to users and advised them that the datasets could be obtained if they contact us via tbstatistics@defra.gsi.gov.uk. The same message was placed on the Publication Hub
- The Head of Profession was advised at the earliest opportunity, and subsequently advised the National Statisticians Office
- As these are GB level statistics, the Devolved Administrations were informed.
- At the time of writing this report, no complaints have been received.
- To ensure equality of access, a request from a user for access to one of the regional datasets by 10:00 was not actioned until after the short public statement went live on the website.

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

As it was not possible to rectify the fault locally, it was referred to the Government Digital Service (GDS) helpdesk.

At 13:16 the GDS helpdesk reported that the problem with opening the spreadsheets had been fixed. GDS advised that they were still working on addressing the underlying problem.

This was a "system error" and nothing Defra have done or have control over.

We have spoken to other Departments and are looking at a possible short term fix that we have discussed with colleagues in Department for Transport.

After a similar incident on 18 April, the problem was flagged-up to GDS at a senior level.

We quickly received a more in-depth explanation of the problem and assurance that following an upgrade and testing this issue should be resolved now and moving forward.

The Defra e-communications team have also been informed.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

5. Links to published statements about this breach

The following short statement was placed on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

“We are currently experiencing some problems with the website meaning users may not be able to download the spreadsheets. Please contact us via tbstatistics@defra.gsi.gov.uk if you need these figures sending”.

The same statement was placed on the Publication Hub.