

## 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, 14 January 2015

### 2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

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

Date of occurrence

13 January 2015

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.
- A short report containing some of the statistics to be published on 14 January was sent by a veterinary adviser, who has PRA, to four Defra policy officials not on the Pre-Release Access list.

- The report did **not** contain the statistical notice or datasets. However it did contain charts showing various statistics to October 2014.
- The breach occurred on Tuesday 13 January at 18:19. It was noticed by the lead statistician at 09:30 the following morning (14 January).
- The lead statistician immediately informed the Head of Profession.

#### Reasons for breach

Human error. The veterinary adviser had failed to realise that the report should not be sent to people who were not the PRA list, including other officials within the DefraTB Programme.

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

- The breach was identified after the statistics had been published. The report had not been circulated by any of the four officials on the original email. The figures were not discussed further before their release.
- The Head of Profession was advised at the earliest opportunity.
- As these are GB level statistics, the Devolved Administrations were informed.
- A public statement was issued on the Defra website on the day of release once the breach had been identified.

### **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.
- Before the next release:
  - The responsible statistician will brief all officials on the PRA list to emphasise the precise rules around PRA. This took place prior to the February release, a presentation was delivered to all those on the PRA list along with press and communications staff. A copy of the presentation was provided to anyone who was unable to attend the briefing; the presentation also included revised guidance.
  - In line with best practice guidance, each official on the PRA list will be required to sign a disclaimer to state that they understand and accept their responsibilities around the Code of Practice. The revised best practice guidance was sent to all on the PRA list. Signed declarations were received from all officers who were asked to complete them before the March release was published.

### **5. Links to published statements about this breach**

Initial statement published in 'details' at:

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

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>.