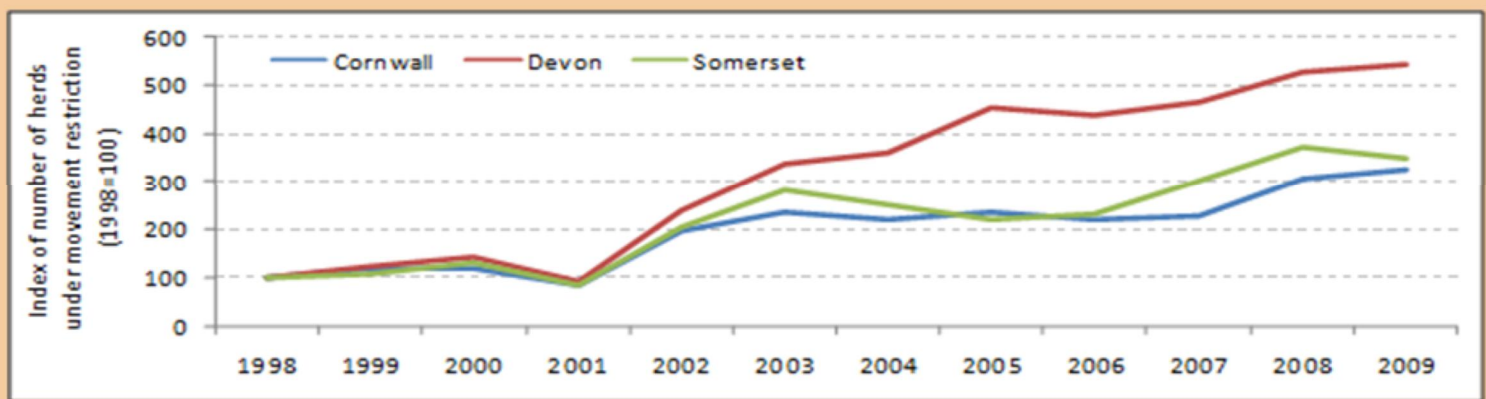


UK, Dartmoor – innovation example 4

TB Control Plans

- **Location:** Dartmoor, UK
- **HNV system:** Extensive grazing, beef cattle on rough upland pastures
- **Scale of operation:** plans in place for most commons (30 commons with associations)
- **Timespan:** annual renewal from 2014.
- **Keys to success:** cattle able to graze on commons and fewer movement tests



Problem being addressed:

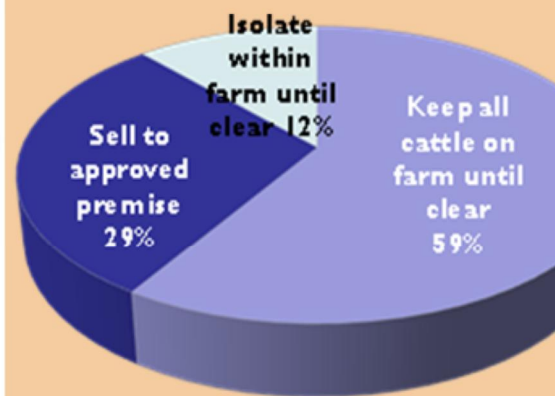
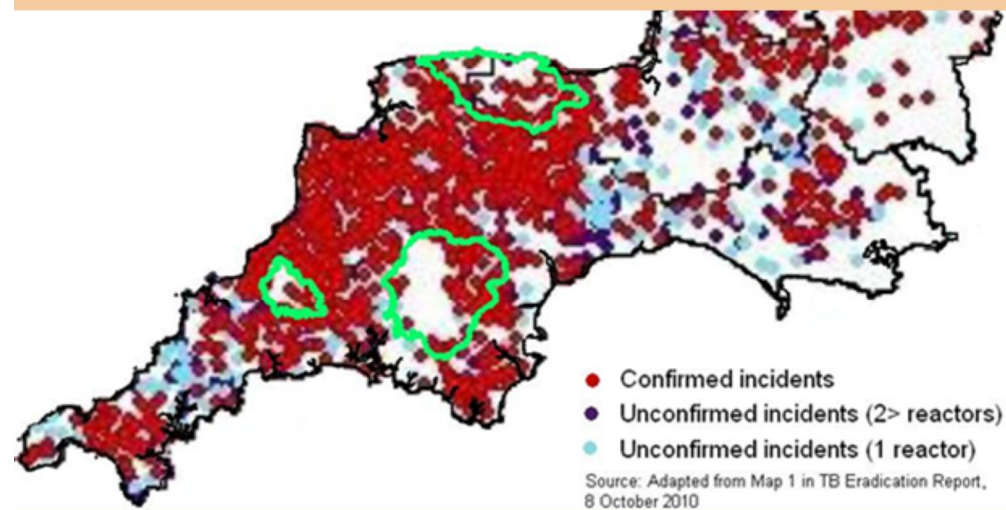
New TB Control regulations introduced in 2014 were impractical for common grazing. The Regulations included post movement testing on leaving the common and introduced multiple tests for animals moving between the farm and common. This made little sense for biosecurity (the commons are often, probably usually, the lowest risk area for TB) and further discouraged the use of the commons for cattle grazing at a time when numbers were already at a low point (probably the lowest ever). If a farmer is under TB restriction and is unable to keep the cattle that tested clear on their land, isolated from other cattle, the main option is to sell the cattle at a special market – the prices at such a market can be very low or in the case of hardy hill cattle non-existent.

Story in a nutshell:

A small group of farmers worked with the State Veterinary Service now called Animal and Plant health Agency (APHA) to provide locally appropriate solutions to these problems. A model plan was designed by farmers in close cooperation with APHA to provide the basis for a risk assessment on individual commons, with the aim of reducing the burden from inappropriate regulation whilst retaining the necessary measures to minimise the risk of spreading TB. Holding areas, off the common but treated as being part of the common for this purpose, are identified to reduce the need for multiple movement tests every time cattle leave the common to go to the bull (bulls are not permitted on the common land) or for veterinary purposes. On the basis of such a plan, licences are issued to avoid post-movement testing off the common. Such plans are in place for most of the individual commons on Dartmoor affecting c300 cattle graziers.

What does TB Control Plan achieve for HNV farming?

- Devon is in the High Risk Area for TB in the UK, requiring annual tests.
- TB Regulations including multiple movement tests are proving to be a deterrent to cattle grazing moorland, resulting in undergrazed vegetation vulnerable to wild fire.
- 2 out of every 3 farmers on Dartmoor have been under restriction (TB) within the last 2 years
- Plans provide State Vets with information to enable a risk assessment following a positive TB test and provide alternative to multiple testing regime that deters farmers from putting cattle on commons, thus allowing a higher level of commons use than otherwise.

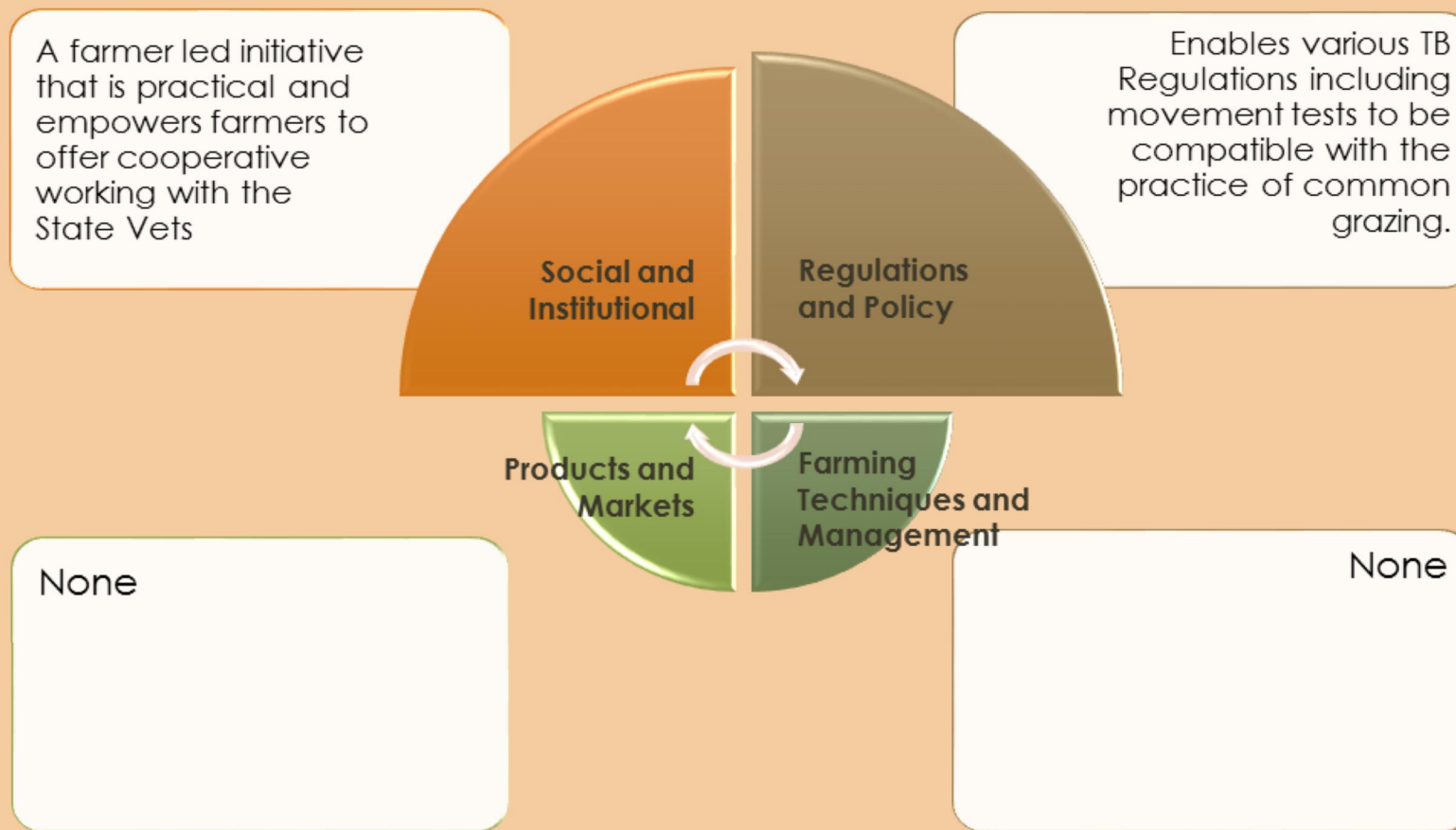


Cattle grazing is an essential ingredient of HNV farming on the commons and loss of cattle grazing was already a significant issue before TB. When South-west England became a high risk TB area, with strict and onerous biosecurity rules in place, cattle farmers faced impractical Regulations. This resulted in some farmers deciding not to put cattle on the commons and many more farmers considering such a move. Two out of every 3 farmers on Dartmoor will have been affected by TB in the last two years. When under restriction options for farmers are few; 29% sell to approved premises (not possible for hardy slow growing cattle breeds) but the rest (71%) have to keep the cattle on the farm until the herd tests clear. This has huge practical implications – no silage, hay making and high costs. Farmers say 'TB could be the end of grazing cattle on the commons; not the disease, but the rules'. (It has already led to a tendency towards finishing of cattle, rather than the traditional selling of stores and this has implication for breed type).

Achievements

A Common's TB Control Plan enables the state vets to undertake a risk assessment that may allow cattle to return to the common. The plan also reduces the need for post movement tests on the common (impractical) and introduces the concept of holding areas (to be treated as part of the common) allowing free movement between the holding area and common without incurring need for movement tests. Reducing the burden of impractical regulations allows cattle farmers to continue to graze the moorland. The process encourages better dialogue between state vets (APHA) and farmers.

How does the TB Control Plan respond to the HNV LINK innovation themes?



Social and institutional:

Communal grazing has a unique set of issues that new TB Regulations failed to recognise. Dialogue between state vets and farmers led to collaborative working to secure a solution. Although cattle herds are “hefted” or “leered” to specific parts of the common and rarely mix with other cattle on the same common policy makers assumed otherwise. Demonstrating that farmers could work together and consider the implications of a TB breakdown in a neighbours herd gave the vets confidence in the proposals.

Regulation and Policy:

Regulations and policy are rarely designed for common grazing resulting in impractical and poor practice. Examples include: 1. all cattle movements over 10 miles requiring a movement test. 2. Post movement tests when leaving the common – impractical because the facilities to retain and test on the common do not exist.

The process that made it happen and critical factors for success

- Farmers sought solutions and contacted APHA.
- Certain individuals in Defra/APHA willing to progress practical solutions.
- Investment of agency staff and farmers' time. Production of maps and communication with farmers undertaken by commons' associations.
- Series of 5 meetings with agency staff (4) and farmers (5) produced draft plan for wider consultation.
- Change of APHA staff threatened process as new staff/vets not aware of plans.



Defra proposed new regulations in January 2014. after concerns raised by farmers/commoners Defra officials visited Dartmoor. Critical meeting between three AHVLA (now APHA)vets and six Dartmoor commoners in February proposed idea of plan to provide necessary info for risk assessment and better understanding of how commons/cows operate. Drafts exchanged between APHA and farmers, led to agreed process by mid summer.

Critical to success was certain individuals willing to contribute time and expertise alongside a willingness by APHA staff to find a practical solution.

Recent changes of staff within APHA threatens the process due to a poor understanding of the plans and how they operate. Failure to ensure new staff are made aware of previous agreed procedures and process now of concern. However, the innovations are significant enough that they should be taken on board at a higher level in APHA and rolled out with local adaptation in other high risk TB areas of the UK – failure to do so thus far is extremely disappointing, given the supposed commitment to ensuring that control measures are risk based.

Lessons learnt from this innovation example, and its potential replication

- Collaborative working between farmers (practical) and policy/regulators resulted in better understanding plus a solution.
- The approach of a plan and holding areas are now applied to other commons in south-west England
- There needs to be willingness to participate in discussions and to produce a solution from all parties.



The policy-makers had failed to recognise the significant difference between common grazing and herds kept on one enclosed farm. Farmers prepared to explain the differences can be very successful.

The principle of joint working between practitioners and regulators is easily replicated but requires engagement and element of trust from both sides.

A thematic network on High Value Farming
Learning, INnovation & Knowledge

HNV-LINK



This project is funded by
the European Union Horizon 2020
research and innovations programme

Disclaimer: This document reflects the author's view and the
Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may
be made of the information it contains.

