

# IJCP - A look back on 2020

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**A**s 2020 draws to a close, we take a look at the Irish Johne's Control Programme developments during the year. Much of early 2020 addressed the challenges that became apparent at the end of 2019, enabling farmers and their veterinary practitioners to complete the programme requirements during the January extension.

We then undertook to provide clear information of the importance of, and requirements for, completing the annual VRAMP and whole herd test. The four stand-out issues that troubled herds in 2019, and to a lesser extent in 2020, were:

1. Ensuring that all animals on the farm aged two years or more (including culls, bulls, dry cows and heifers) are either tested or, for non-breeding beef animals kept entirely separate to the milking or breeding herd (i.e. excluding cull or dry dairy cows etc.), claiming exemption.
2. Related to 1 above, ensuring that cull dairy cows etc. are either removed from the herd before herd testing starts, or included in the herd test; otherwise applying for a one-off exemption from the milk processor through AHI.
3. Some confusion about whether testing and VRAMPs conducted in January 2020 counted towards 2019 or 2020 requirements.
4. Testing animals with a positive or inconclusive result to an ELISA test by the fully funded ancillary PCR test, where required.



IRISH JOHNE'S CONTROL PROGRAMME

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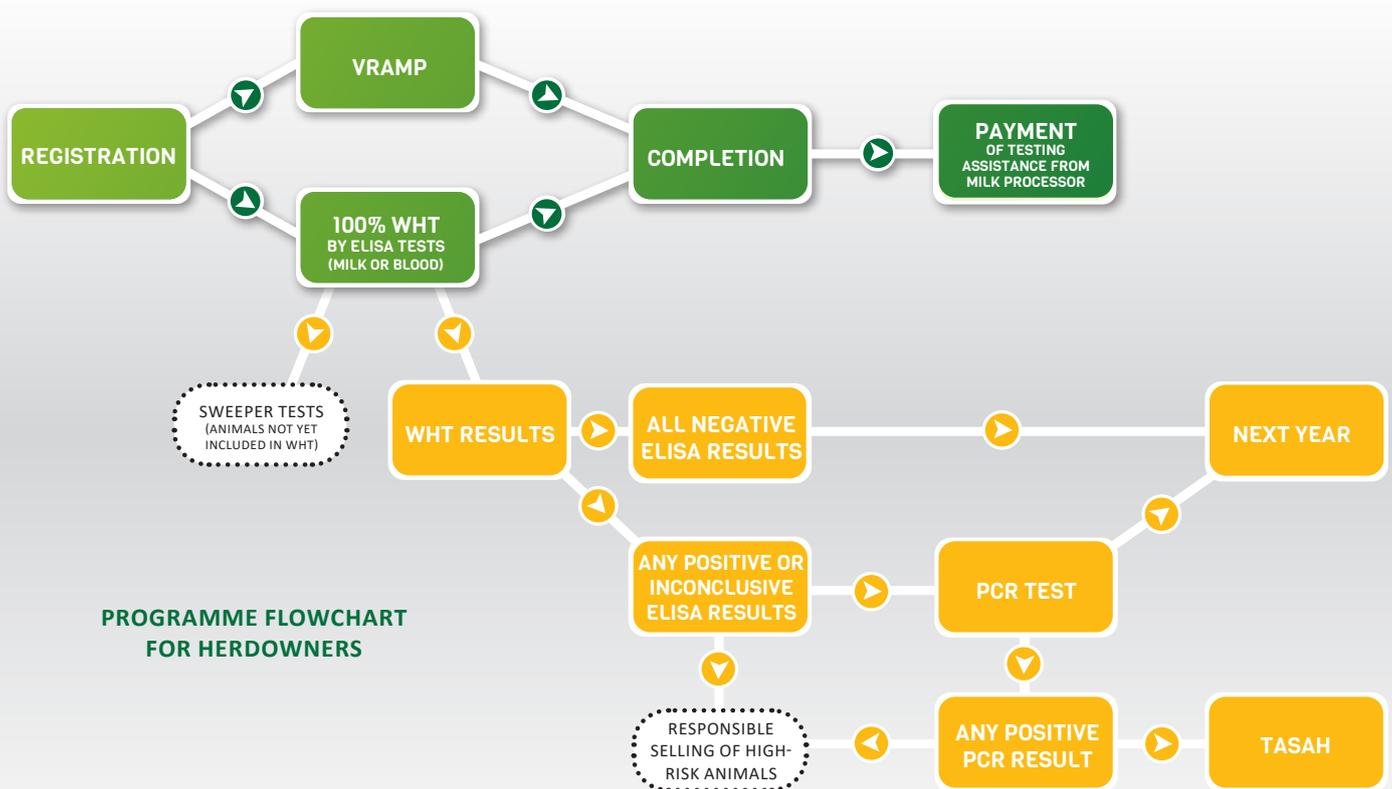


To assist herdowners and veterinary practitioners to understand and act on these issues, the Johne's dashboard screens on ICBF have been enhanced to now show the status of VRAMPs, and whether and which animals are required for funded ancillary PCR testing or recommended ELISA re-testing. Outstanding activities are highlighted on the dashboard in red type. These additions complement information already provided on which eligible animals have not yet been tested towards completing the WHT requirement.

Farmers also have ready access to the flowchart to provide a visual summary of the programme, with links to essential details [click here](#).

There is an additional flowchart available for veterinary practitioners, that provides more technical information.

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PROGRAMME FLOWCHART FOR HERDOWNERS

## Priorities for 2021 include

1. Finalise and release a standardised protocol for monitoring and demonstrating herd assurance; this will allow herds to track progress in the programme and help farmers who need to procure additional breeding animals to source low-risk animals from herds in the Irish Johne's Control Programme.
2. Refine the VRAMP to offer information about progress over time and to benchmark herds' scores.
3. Continue to build the number of herds participating in the programme, from 1,750 at the end of 2020 (1,740 dairy and 10 beef); these represent 11% of the dairy herds and 16% of dairy cows in Ireland.

The programme has previously been focussed on dairy herds, but now also accepts beef herds, although funding for herd testing and VRAMPs is not currently available. Beef herds may benefit through providing assurance to purchasers, particularly in relation to pedigree animals, and through addressing known infection in both pedigree and commercial herds.

National surveillance conducted by DAFM, testing bulk tank milk samples of dairy herds, has identified a relatively small number of herds that are likely to be infected. These herds will be notified by DAFM of the surveillance result, and encouraged to register in the programme to avail of the funded supports.

The programme will continue to support research and development to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Johne's disease control in the Irish context. Relevant projects include assessment of Herd Environmental Sampling as an alternative testing modality, clarity on the differences between milk and blood testing, modelling of factors affecting spread of infection, and assessment of farm management factors on calf mortality.

The Irish Johne's Control Programme implements a long-term approach to manage the likelihood and impacts of this significant and established disease in cattle. Control of Johne's disease is cost-effective, more so when utilising the funded supports of the programme.

The VRAMP considerations for farms registered in the programme are obviously focussed on Johne's disease, but their principles lay a foundation for the integrated, whole-of-farm biosecurity assessment and planning that DAFM's new [National Farmed Animal Biosecurity Strategy](#) will promote.

AHI encourages all owners of cattle, especially dairy and pedigree beef herds, to join the Irish Johne's Control Programme. To register, or for more information, contact AHI on 071 967 1928 or at [www.animalhealthireland.ie](http://www.animalhealthireland.ie).

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