

IJCP Decisions and Actions

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The last JD Bulletin looked at the benefits of participating in the IJCP. This JD Bulletin describes the points during the year at which you must take decisions and actions to complete the programme elements.

These programme elements are the annual veterinary risk assessment and management plan (VRAMP), annual whole herd test (WHT) including ancillary PCR testing for animals with positive or inconclusive ELISA test results when required and a TASAH investigation if infection is confirmed through ancillary testing.

Refer to the programme Flowchart for a visual outline and details of these elements, [click here](#).

The two most common stumbling blocks for herds in completing these elements have been ensuring that all animals aged 2 years and above are tested, and completing ancillary PCR dung testing on animals with positive or inconclusive results to ELISA milk or blood tests.

1. Plan your VRAMP and WHT

Talk to your approved veterinary practitioner (AVP) to arrange your VRAMP and to plan your WHT. Even if you intend to test using milk recording samples, your AVP needs to be engaged from the start to ensure timely completion of all the other requirements of the programme.

Both the VRAMP and the WHT must be completed for herd-testing assistance to be paid. They should be conducted early- to mid-year where possible; do not leave them until the end of the year and run the risk of non-completion, which will jeopardise assistance payments. Doing them early also gives more opportunity to complete follow-up testing and TASAH within the year if required.

2. Conduct your VRAMP

The VRAMP may be conducted at any time of the year. There is merit in doing the first VRAMP in the lead-up to calving, so that changes may be implemented straight away when interventions can have the greatest impact of spread of infection to the next generation of calves. In subsequent years, the VRAMP can be done at any convenient time of the year; the post-calving period is a good time to review how measures implemented following any previous VRAMPs have worked, particularly those relating to procedures and facilities to improve calf hygiene and separation. The most important considerations of the VRAMP are that it is completed each year that it is required and that you implement the recommendations that are agreed with the AVP.

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Animal Health Ireland, 2-5 The Archways, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, N41 WN27



3. Conduct a complete WHT, including ancillary testing if required

You must also schedule your annual whole herd test (WHT) with your milk recording organisation or your AVP. This must be at least six months after the start of any previous WHT, and should be planned to avoid sampling animals within 90 days after the TB test or within 7 days after calving. If you have animals for culling, either remove them from the farm prior to starting your WHT or include them in the sampling.

Ensure that the WHT is complete; all animals on the farm aged two years or more ('eligible animals') must be tested. You may need to arrange a 'sweeper test' to sample animals that have been missed. This includes bulls, culls, sick cows and heifers, and may also include animals for which previous samples could not be tested (reported as 'Empty' or 'Sample unsuitable'). Complete the sweeper test within 30 days of starting the WHT.

The only eligible animals on the farm that may be exempted from testing are non-breeding animals held separately to the breeding herd, such as a beef finishing unit. If this applies to you, submit a form (available from the AHI Johne's webpages or your AVP) listing these animals with AVP endorsement to AHI.

You will receive an SMS whenever Johne's test results are uploaded to ICBF. If herd testing gives any positive or inconclusive ELISA results, discuss with your AVP immediately. Do not cull these animals until you and your AVP have decided on follow-up action. In most cases, the programme requires and fully funds ancillary PCR testing on dung samples of those animals. If this applies to your animals, do not put off the testing; arrange it with your AVP as soon as practicable.

Ancillary PCR testing is not required if Johne's disease has already been confirmed in the herd. If the positive or inconclusive tests were from animals sampled within 90 days after a TB test or within 7 days after calving (milk sample only), the animals should be re-tested by ELISA on a blood or milk sample. Your AVP can help you determine whether this applies to your animals.

4. TASAH

If your herd has Johne's disease confirmed (a positive result to the PCR or culture test for the first time), your AVP will conduct a funded TASAH investigation. Take this opportunity to get more information about infection, within-herd spread and impacts in the herd, so that you can confidently amend your priorities and the management recommendations in your VRAMP accordingly.

5. Animal movements

The programme requires you to take a responsible approach to prevent further spread of Johne's disease, by not selling, to other breeding herds, animals which are considered at high risk of being infected because they are 'test-positive'. These are animals which have positive results to a PCR or culture test; or positive or inconclusive results to the ELISA test (unless they are in a herd with no prior positive PCR/culture result, and they have subsequently had an ancillary PCR test with a negative result [suspect animal], and they have had a negative ELISA result at the following WHT). Test-positive animals should be consigned only direct to slaughter, or to a feedlot or similar for feeding for slaughter.

6. Use your AVP

Most of the decisions and actions that you take in the IJCP involve your AVP either directly or with their advice. Your AVP has received training and regular updates on the IJCP to be able to provide you with expert advice. Working with your AVP, and the information that is available to you on the IJCP webpages ([click here](#)), you will together be able to successfully manage Johne's disease in your herd.

In addition, there is full funding by the programme for ancillary tests required for some herds following the WHT; and for a TASAH investigation for any herd where Johne's disease is detected.

Even when there is little or no overt disease (as in most herds today) the IJCP will still deliver improved cow and calf health, protection against introduction of infection, mitigations in case infection is present but not yet apparent or is introduced, and the broader industry trading benefits of herds having JD under control.

As a combined package, these tools enable herd owners to identify their herd's disease status and risks and to prioritise actions to reduce those risks and impacts. While the tools are cost-effective of themselves, their funding under the programme (currently agreed until 2022 and limited to 1,000 new herds per year) makes them very worthwhile.

The IJCP is overseen by an Implementation Group comprising representatives from farmers, milk processors, veterinary practitioners, government, and associated stakeholders in the dairy and beef sectors. This group ensures the IJCP delivers the best possible outcomes for Irish farmers in Johne's disease management. The IG encourages all dairy farmers to participate in the IJCP and to take advantage of the funded supports. The best opportunity to make a start on preventing or reducing the risks and costs of Johne's disease is now available.

Further information is available at www.animalhealthireland.ie, or from your veterinary practitioner. Register in the IJCP by email (jd@animalhealthireland.ie) or telephone (071 967 1928).

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