

Actions to manage Johne's disease risks

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As we approach autumn, it is timely to consider what actions can or should be taken to manage Johne's disease risks and optimise animal health before the end of the year.

Preventing or controlling Johne's disease is estimated to save the average Irish dairy herd €2,000 per year, or significantly more if infection has advanced enough to cause clinical signs of disease (drop in milk production, profound wasting in condition, diarrhoea and death). These savings come from maintaining milk production and the value of cull cows and reducing replacement costs.

For herds which have not yet registered in the Irish Johne's Control Programme, there is still time to take advantage of the funded tools to get in front of this emerging disease. For dairy herds to be funded under the programme, herds must be registered (contact Animal Health Ireland, details below) and two requirements must be completed before year's end, which are still easily achievable.



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The first requirement is a veterinary risk assessment and management plan (VRAMP) which will show you three actions you can take, based on your priorities, to reduce the likelihood and consequences of spread of Johne's disease. This VRAMP is carried out face-to-face with a trained, approved veterinary practitioner nominated by you and is fully funded.

The second is a herd test of all animals in the herd aged two years or more. The most convenient and cheapest method of whole herd testing is to use the milk samples taken during milk recording, although blood samples collected by the veterinary practitioner can be also used instead.

Herds which are registered in the programme should plan to complete these requirements well before the end of the year. The experience of previous years shows that leaving testing and VRAMPs until the end of the year risks non-completion due to unforeseen events. Milk samples obviously must be taken before cows are dried off, and are preferably taken mid-lactation rather than at the end of lactation.

Samples should not be collected within 90 days after TB testing. If your herd is undergoing frequent TB testing such that the 90-day window is not available, contact your approved veterinary practitioner or AHI to discuss options.



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Make sure that the herd test is complete by referring to your ICBF Johne's disease screen. This shows animals that have been tested and highlights in red if there is still testing to be done. Animals missed from testing but still on the farm are most commonly cows removed from the milking herd, uncalved heifers and bulls. Talk to your veterinary practitioner if you are unsure or need assistance with interpreting the information on your ICBF screen.

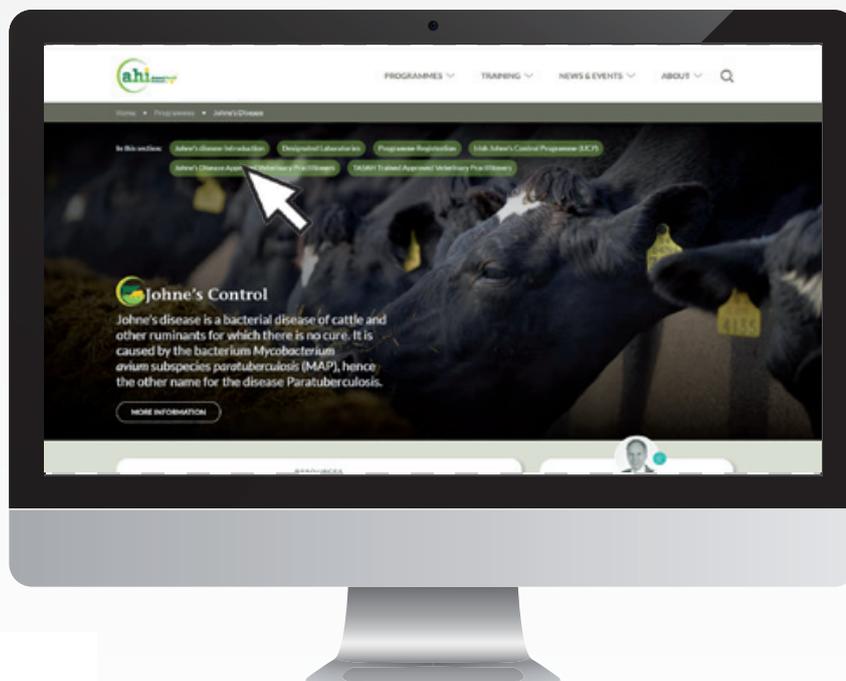
The programme allows non-breeding beef animals (excluding culls from the breeding herd) to be exempted from testing. If this applies to you, complete the exemption form available on the AHI website before the end of the year.

Take a moment to review your last VRAMP. Make sure that you are implementing the recommendations, especially in relation to removing or isolating from the herd high-risk cows as you approach calving.

Finally, arrange with your veterinary practitioner any required ancillary dung testing to follow up animals with positive or inconclusive results to milk or blood ELISA testing, again indicated in red on your ICBF screen.

By joining the Irish Johne's Control Programme and completing the requirements, you will be containing the risks of Johne's disease and optimising the health of your calves and cows.

To register in the IJCP or for more information, visit the AHI website (www.animalhealthireland.ie), email jd@animalhealthireland.ie or phone 071 967 1928.



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