



Completing the Whole Herd Test

Lawrence Gavey, Johne's disease Programme Manager

At this time of the year, many herds in the Irish Johne's Control Programme are taking last-minute action to complete the annual requirements of the whole herd test (WHT) and veterinary risk assessment and management plan (VRAMP).

As we are receiving many queries about completing the WHT, this article explains why it is important.

As for the past two years, the deadline for completing these for 2021 has been extended until the end of January 2022. This extension does include starting a WHT; any WHT started in January 2022 will count towards that year, not to 2021. Animal Health Ireland is conducting a survey to find out why this pattern of last-minute activities is so prevalent and to advise whether the programme needs to change to suit.

In the meantime, it is essential that herds in the programme complete outstanding Johne's programme actions by 31st January. Each herd's ICBF Johne's screen (<https://johnes.icbf.com>) highlights any outstanding actions.

ICBF Johne's screen

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The most common causes of outstanding testing are that animals were removed from the herd but not the farm at the time of testing, bulls and teaser bulls were missed, and beef animals were omitted.

The programme requirement is that all animals aged two years or more when testing for the year started must be tested. Meeting this requirement is one of the conditions for payment of herd testing assistance from milk processors.

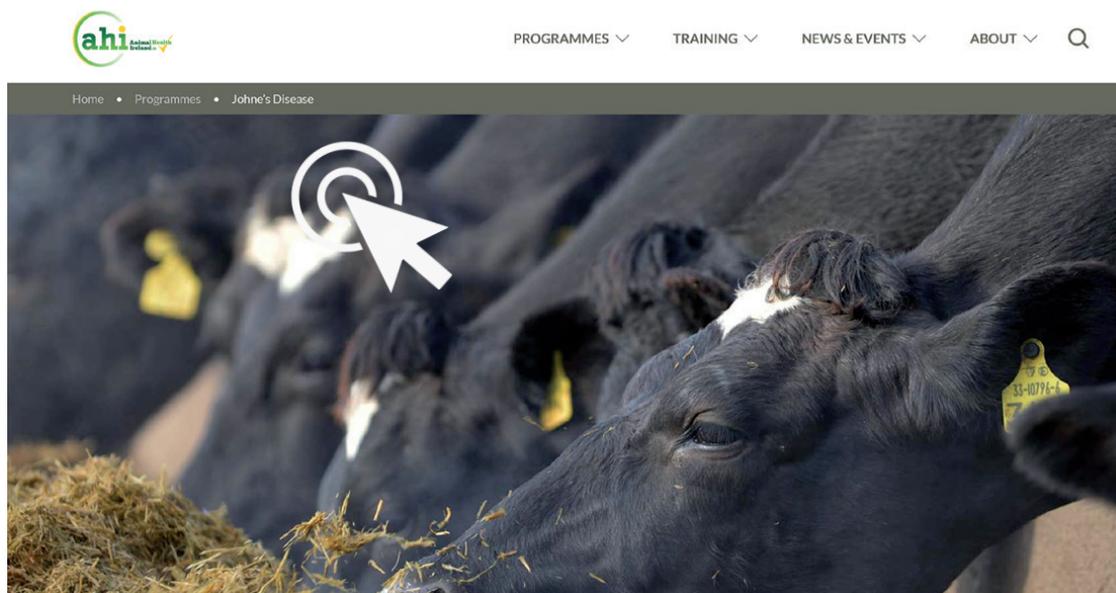
The reasoning behind this requirement is the low 'sensitivity', or ability to detect infection, of the ELISA test used on blood or milk samples at the level of individual animal; the appropriate way to use the ELISA test is as a herd test. Testing of sufficient animals, or all eligible animals in a typical Irish dairy herd, will build assurance whether a herd is infected or not, and detect some but not all infected animals. If animals are missed from the whole herd test, the accuracy of the assessment is affected.

This negative effect of missing animals is even greater when the missed animals are older (more likely, if infected, to test positive); sick, infertile, lame or have previous positive Johne's test results (more likely to be infected), or bought-in animals (possible source of introduced infection).

Some animals can be exempted from testing, by completing an exemption form available on the website of Animal Health Ireland [click here](#). This can apply to non-breeding animals held separate from the breeding herd (does not include cull cows), animals that have died or unexpectedly been culled, and as a one-off for animals removed from the herd but not the farm at the time of herd testing.

Contact your veterinary practitioner in the programme to help you to complete a VRAMP or WHT.

Irish Johne's Control Programme



www.animalhealthireland.ie/johnes

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 **Johne's Control**
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