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PARASITE CONTROL PROGRAMME

Redwater infection in cattle



NATIONAL MASTITIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

Antibiotic change and preparation for winter 2022



IRISH JOHNE'S CONTROL PROGRAMME

Making the most of the VRAMP



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Redwater infection in cattle

Natascha Meunier, Beef HealthCheck Programme Manager

Redwater is a severe life-threatening disease of cattle caused by a parasite called *Babesia divergens*. The disease is transmitted by a tick that is commonly found in Ireland, particularly in the west and along the Shannon river system. Keeping pastures well managed can prevent animals being bitten by ticks and infected with the disease, although margins near hedges may still be a suitable environment for ticks. Recent studies have shown that the disease is declining in Ireland but this means farmers and vets may be less familiar with the clinical signs.

How will I know if an animal has redwater?

After an animal is bitten by a redwater-infected tick, it can take up to three weeks to show any signs of disease.

Early stage signs:

- Animals staying away from the group.
- Reduced appetite.
- High temperature.
- Frothy urine with a red-brownish colour.
- Diarrhoea (often 'pipe-stem diarrhoea' passed as a thin jet).

Later stage signs:

- Weakness/staggering, animal unable to stand.
- Changes in colour of gums and under eyelids to very pale (anaemic) or yellow (jaundice).
- Normal urine colour.
- Constipation.
- Death.

Animals on pasture should be carefully monitored for signs of disease, particularly during spring or autumn, especially if they have been recently introduced to the herd. Animals can die quickly following the first appearance of signs of infection.

What should be done if I suspect an animal has redwater?

Call your veterinary practitioner immediately. An early diagnosis and veterinary treatment are key to survival for the animal. Treatment may include an injection of imidocarb dipropionate to kill the parasite. This drug has a withdrawal period of 213 days for meat and 21 days for milk. Poorly nourished animals, pregnant cows and animals without previous exposure to redwater parasites tend to be more severely affected.

How can redwater be prevented?

- Minimise dense vegetation and under-grazed rough pasture which are favourable areas for ticks. Follow good pasture management practices to prevent under-grazing and overgrowth. Clear scrub, ferns and rushes from grazing land. Ticks can persist on the margins of reclaimed fields.
- Keep susceptible cattle out of tick-infested areas. High risk periods are April-May and August-October but mild, wet weather can allow tick activity to continue through the summer.
- Expose cattle to tick areas before 6 months of age or buy-in animals that have previously grazed tick-infested areas. Calves show natural resistance to redwater and tend to not develop clinical disease under 6 months of age. Calves over 6 to 9 months of age that have not been exposed to redwater ticks and are introduced to tick-infested areas are highly susceptible to infection and serious illness.
- Specific preventative measures such as topical tick treatments or preventive drug treatment can be used to prevent disease. Speak to your veterinary practitioner on the best approach.



Good pasture management practices should aim to prevent undergrazing and overgrowth

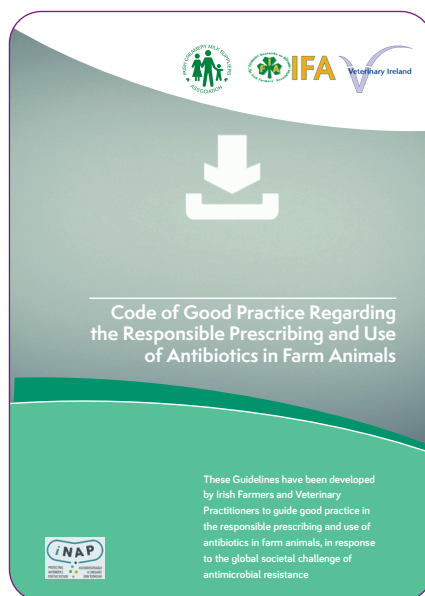
Antibiotic change and preparation for winter 2022

Tom McTague, Assistant CellCheck Programme Manager

The use of antibiotics on farms is changing. “Use as little as possible and as much as necessary” is the basis of both responsible and prudent use of antibiotics on your farm. Some people may think that this doesn’t affect them, but it affects everyone who either prescribes or administers antibiotics. Bacterial resistance to antibiotics, referred to as antimicrobial resistance (AMR), is increasing throughout the world. If the right antibiotic is not administered to the right animal for the right disease for the right duration at the right dose, resistance to antibiotics can develop, resulting in that antibiotic ceasing to be effective to treat that bacteria on your farm and the potential for resistance to be transferred to bacteria that cause disease in humans.

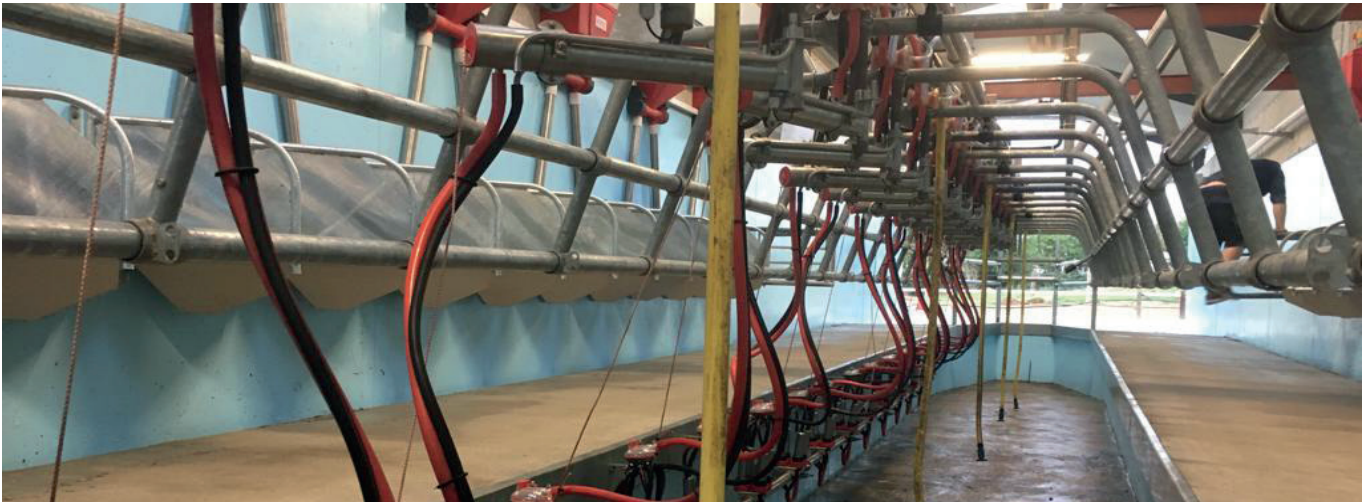
Since January 2022, on farm use of antibiotics has changed as a result of EU Regulation:

- Antibiotics are not to be applied routinely nor used to compensate for poor hygiene, inadequate animal husbandry or lack of care or compensate for poor farm management.
- Preventive administration of antibiotics to an animal or group of animals is only possible where your veterinary practitioner determines that an individual animal or a restricted group of animals are at a very high risk of infection.
- The use of antibiotics to control the spread of disease in a group of animals with infection can only be carried out if the practitioner determines that the risk of spread of an infection or of an infectious disease within the group is high and where no other appropriate alternatives are available to the practitioner.



What opportunities are available to reduce antibiotic use on your farm? An important first step is to draw up a Herd Health Plan to ensure the best possible health and welfare of the cattle on the farm, which, in turn, leads to optimum animal performance and productivity. The Herd Health Plan should be devised as a collaborative effort with your veterinary practitioner. The plan is developed based on their unique personal knowledge of the farm. Mastitis control as part of the Herd Health Plan is a key area for dairy farms, accounting for the majority of antibiotic use in most herds. Antibiotic usage to control mastitis during lactation or the dry period can be reduced in the following ways:

- Understand what is best for your cows taking into consideration what is happening at herd level using your monthly bulk tank SCC from your Co-op. SCC records for individual cows can give you a better picture of where problems might lie within the herd. If you are not recording each cow, it is never too late to start.
- Find out the type of bacteria involved in your mastitis cases. Sampling of 6-10 cows with mastitis of varying lactation numbers during the year is all that is required. This will provide an adequate bacterial profile and list whether they are susceptible or resistant to a range of antibiotics.
- Maintain accurate records of antibiotic usage in your cows: date of administration, amount of antibiotic used, duration of treatment, number/freeze brand of cows, withdrawal period and unused antibiotic. This record is essential when looking at treatment required at drying off.
- Start planning for selective dry cow therapy in your herd this Autumn if not already started. If eligible, [click here](#) to sign up for a free Dry Cow Consult.



New changes to Dry Cow Therapy for 2022

New Veterinary Medicines Regulation EU 2019/6 which came into effect in January 2022 changes how your veterinary practitioner can approach prescribing antimicrobial dry cow therapy. This is to ensure the continued effectiveness of antibiotics and to reduce the development of resistance.

A blanket approach to drying off is no longer permitted, instead your veterinary practitioner must adopt a **selective approach to dry cow therapy** when prescribing dry cow mastitis tubes for your herd.

With a selective approach, all cows are considered individually in terms of the risk of mastitis over the dry period. Your veterinary practitioner will determine if a dry cow tube is needed at drying off, in some cows an internal teat sealant alone will be sufficient.

A selective approach involves doing a risk assessment at the individual animal level to determine which cows will need antimicrobial treatment over the dry period.

Dry cow tubes can be prescribed but on an individual cow basis where there is evidence of a risk of infection in that cow.

Your veterinary practitioner needs **individual cow information** to assess the risk of infection to the individual cows in your herd.

Information includes:

- Records of all mastitis cases
- Previous treatments and related outcomes
- Any milk quality data including somatic cell counts, bacterial culture and antibiotic susceptibility testing

Milk recording is recommended as a key tool to better inform the development of a targeted dry cow mastitis control strategy.

Your practitioner may also need to examine the cows and do further tests. To ensure an effective approach to mastitis control, a selective dry-cow strategy for your herd must be worked out carefully, hence the importance of engaging in good time with your veterinary practitioner when making farm-level decisions.



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

Making the most of the VRAMP

Lawrence Gavey, Johne's disease Programme Manager

The veterinary risk assessment and management plan (VRAMP) is an annual requirement for the Irish Johne's Control Programme (IJCP), but it has relevance to all livestock owners in Ireland.

The VRAMP provides an opportunity to systematically identify and reduce the risks of Johne's disease; specifically its incidence, impact and costs to the farm.

Remember that 'risk' involves two factors: the likelihood of an adverse event, and the consequence of that adverse event. Managing disease risk involves assessment and mitigation of both factors, prioritising these factors as high, medium or low, and responding as appropriate to the farm's needs.

The VRAMP process is designed to identify disease threats and incidents, how they may enter or have already entered a farm or spread within a farm, how those threats may change over time, and what actions may be feasible and effective in stopping or reducing the spread and effects of infection.

The IJCP VRAMP was modelled on similar Johne's control programmes in other jurisdictions, most notably Canada and the USA, and a similar approach has also been adopted in many European countries, including Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

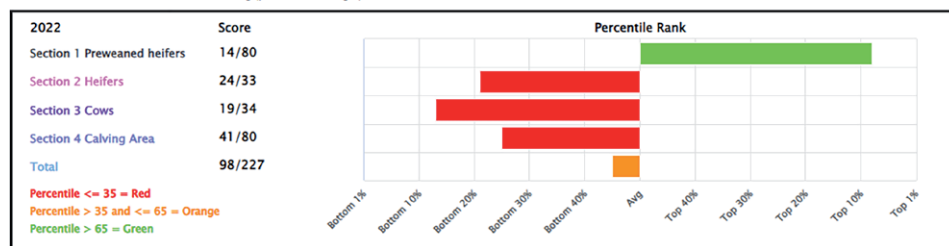
The Johne's programme requires and supports the VRAMP through training approved veterinary practitioners (AVPs), having template questionnaires to guide the assessment and planning, funding your preferred AVP to undertake the on-farm VRAMP with you, and providing an analysis of VRAMP performance.

That some farms' experience with VRAMPs has been more a box-ticking exercise than a thoughtful analysis is a missed opportunity, but you can make better use of the next VRAMP. Allocate sufficient time, up to two hours, for a detailed assessment. Look at test results; the prior and current potential routes of entry of infection to your farm (primarily through entry of livestock, so aim to keep a closed herd); and of the opportunities for faecal-oral spread within the herd (especially, but not only, from adult cattle to young calves). Removal of test-positive animals from the herd, and attention to good hygiene of cows, calving pens, calf-rearing facilities and heifer pastures are important factors.

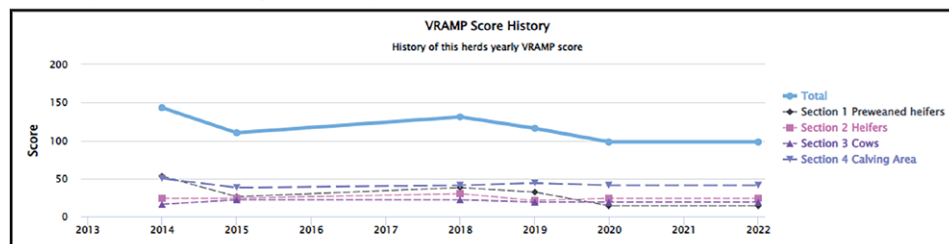
There have been two recent enhancements to the VRAMP. Firstly, you can now see how the farm's VRAMP scores have been tracking over time, and how these scores compare to other herds in the programme (Figure 1). This analysis is available by downloading the Herd Johne's Summary Report from the herd status screen on ICBF. You and your AVP can use this analysis to pinpoint areas that may be lagging behind average and may be the most cost-effective to tackle.

7. VRAMP

Most recent recorded scores and benchmarking (percentile ranking¹⁰):



Trend - scores: (Note: Lower score = better management and lower risk)



Trend - benchmarking (percentile rank): (Note: Higher rank = better performance relative to other herds)

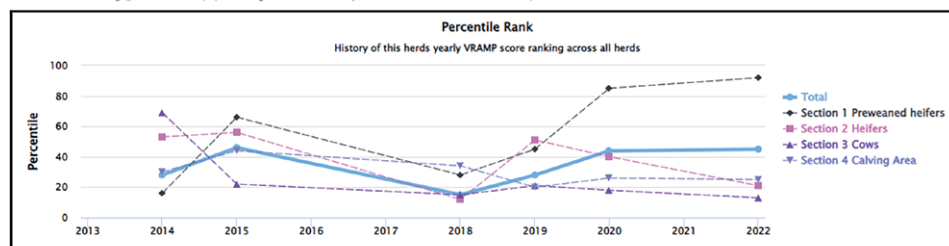


Figure 1. Extract of VRAMP score analysis from example of Herd Johne's Summary Report

The second enhancement is the provision to the AVPs of a guide to drafting the recommended actions or interventions that make up the final part of the VRAMP. This guide offers suggestions of generic actions and also emphasises that the recommendations should be *Specific* (clear to the user), *Measurable* (so you can assess progress or completion), *Achievable* (within the resources of the farm), *Relevant* (accepted by the herd owner as priorities of the farm), and *Time-bound* (specified deadline by when the action should be completed) = 'SMART Goals'.

By you and your AVP putting concentrated effort into the VRAMP questionnaire, reviewing animal movements and VRAMP scores, and using the Interventions guide, you can get the most out of your Johne's VRAMP.

The same principles can be applied for those herds undertaking a TASA assessment in response to a positive result to ancillary faecal testing (PCR or culture).

And all herds, whether in the IJCP or not, can apply this model of critical assessment of risk factors and then designing and committing to actions that reduce exposure to, or impact of, those factors when considering any disease threat, such as calf scours, internal and external parasites, mastitis, lameness, BVD, IBR and TB.

We can expect this model to guide the implementation of on-farm biosecurity measures, so engaging constructively now in the VRAMP process through the IJCP will set you up for successfully adopting biosecurity responsibilities as they emerge in the future, consistent with EU and DAFM strategies.



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