

SPRING EDITION 2023

ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND

# Stakeholders'

## NEWSLETTER

EVENTS AND MEDIA



### AHI PROGRAMME UPDATES

BEEF HEALTHCHECK



PARASITE CONTROL



BVD



CELLCHECK



IBR



JOHNE'S DISEASE



PIG HEALTHCHECK POULTRY



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

Phone 071 9671928 | Email [ahi@animalhealthireland.ie](mailto:ahi@animalhealthireland.ie) | Website [www.animalhealthireland.ie](http://www.animalhealthireland.ie)



*To contribute to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable farming and agri-food sector through improved animal health and welfare.*



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

Phone: 071 9671928 Email: [ahi@animalhealthireland.ie](mailto:ahi@animalhealthireland.ie)



## CONTENTS

Introduction	04
Events And Media	06
Beef HealthCheck	12
Parasite Control	14
BVD	15
CellCheck	19
IBR	24
Johne's Disease	25
Pig HealthCheck and Poultry	27





# Introduction

Dr David Graham, CEO, Animal Health Ireland

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

**W**elcome to the Spring edition of our stakeholder newsletter which provides reports across our various programmes and activities encompassing cattle, pigs and poultry during what has been another busy period.

As reported under CellCheck, during this quarter we completed analysis of the national SCC profile for 2022 and milk recording alongside analysis of sales data for in-lactation and dry cow intra-mammary tubes. While both the national average bulk milk SCC profile and the proportion of milk supplied with an annual SCC of less than 200,000 cells/mL have remained largely unchanged at 183,000 cells/mL, and 66%, respectively, it is encouraging to see the continued increase in the level of herds engaging with milk recording, increasing by 9% to 59% of herds and 77% of cows. 2022 was an important year of transition to selective dry cow therapy, with sales data recording a downturn in the number of treatments sold relative to the preceding two years, with sales of in-lactation tubes showing further decreases also. The continued reduction in the proportion of both types of tubes sold that contain the highest priority critically important (HP-CIA) antimicrobials is also encouraging as part of the sector's contribution to addressing antimicrobial resistance.

We are also pleased that DAFM have confirmed that the Parasite Control TASA activity will be available to cattle and sheep farmers in 2023. This follows on from the success of this programme following its introduction in 2022, when more than 16,000 herds and flocks participated.

There has also been extensive activity in the BVD programme during this period as we move through the peak of spring calving, with the numbers of herds reporting positive results continuing to decline. Biosecurity continues to be a key focus for the programme, seeking to ensure on the one hand that any virus present in herds is contained and eliminated without onward spread, and on the other that all herds take measures to minimize the risk of accidental introduction. This is particularly important at this time of year as we move into the breeding season, when exposure of susceptible dams can

*We are also pleased that DAFM have confirmed that the Parasite Control TASA activity will be available to cattle and sheep farmers in 2023. This follows on from the success of this programme following its introduction in 2022, when more than 16,000 herds and flocks participated.*



[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

lead to the creation of persistently infected calves to be born next year and a series of recent communications from Animal Health Ireland and other stakeholders have highlighted this in recent weeks.

The Irish Johne's Control Programme also reached a milestone, with the completion of the four years of Phase 2 (2019-2022). A detailed review of the programme to inform discussion and decisions on Phase 3 is currently underway.

During this period, following extensive work by the IBR Technical Working Group, proposals for a national eradication programme on IBR were presented to an Implementation Group for consideration. Work is ongoing to address various actions from that meeting, including how such a programme would be costed, which will be reported back in due course. Ultimately, any decision to progress a programme, and the nature thereof, will be taken in consultation with our stakeholders through the Implementation Group.

Lameness is recognised as a challenge from the perspectives of welfare, economic impact and climate, and this quarter saw the start of regular items in our monthly news sheet to raise farmer awareness and understanding of its impacts and causes, and measures to address it.

This period also saw the launch by Meat Industry Ireland of its Beef Sector Sustainability Report and Roadmap to 2030. We welcome the inclusion of an Action to increase the capture and reporting of Beef HealthCheck data to 100% by mid-2024, and look forward to working with stakeholders to progress this.

Finally, we have continued delivery of a suite of TASAH activities to the pig and poultry sectors, including assessing risk factors for tail biting and biosecurity assessments, and it is encouraging to see evidence of these contributing to improvements reflected in the scores for repeated assessments.

I trust that you will find it an interesting and informative read.





# Events and Media

Gráinne Dwyer, Communications and Events Manager

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

## CalfCare on-farm events

A nationwide series of 15 CalfCare events entitled 'Back to Basics: CalfCare 2023' were held during the month of January. These events were run in partnership with Teagasc and 11 Dairy Co-ops supporting the events in their region – Arrabawn, Aurivo, Centenary Thurles, Bandon, Lisavaird, Dairygold, Tirlan, Kerry Agri Business, North Cork Creameries, Lakeland Dairies, Tipperary Co-op and supported by Volac.

### Topics covered were:

- Feeding the calf – best practice around the feeding of CMR/whole milk including feeding rates when fed manually or using automatic feeders.
- Know your number – what is the correct number of calves to rear in a particular house (and what to do if you have more calves than the optimum number)/calf comfort/alternative housing options.
- Management at weaning – best practice around management at weaning/minimising the risk of 'summer scour syndrome'.
- Calf health – identifying signs of good health and illness- managing pain relief (at calving/calf scour/disbudding/pneumonia), and vaccination.
- Calf rearing KPI's – What are the key targets for a successful calf rearing season to look out (mortality/daily gain).



## Events and Media

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

Speakers included Teagasc dairy advisors and AHI CalfCare TWG members and veterinary practitioners who had a special interest in calf health.

Attendance was in excess of 1,300 farmers across all 15 events. This would be in line with previous attendance figures at our earlier CalfCare Roadshows. Our CalfCare Roadshows commenced in 2012 and have been ran each year with the exception of three years (2020, 2021 and 2022) due to Covid.

To extend the reach of the CalfCare messages and to assist farmers who were unable to attend the events, each of the four presentations were recorded. These videos are posted on the CalfCare section of the AHI website. In addition, the links were sent to all dairy processor representatives for use on their website or for distributing through their supplier SMS system or App. [Click here](#) to view the videos.





## Events and Media

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Bord Bia

Animal Health Ireland was approached by Bord Bia in December 2022 for support with the reviewing and planning of their proposed five new eLearning modules on Animal Welfare. These proposed modules will expand their range of training modules available to SDAS/SBLAS approved farmers on their eLearning platform.

The titles for the five modules are: Animal Welfare – General; Animal Welfare – Dairy; Animal Welfare – Calves; Animal Welfare – Sheep; Animal Welfare – Beef.

It is proposed that these training modules will be available on the eLearning platform in the next couple of weeks. This work with Bord Bia is in addition to the support and collaboration given by AHI in the development of similar modules relating to pig welfare for pig farmers. These modules include general principles of pig welfare, why it is important, and the link between high welfare, animal health and performance.

### SVEPM conference

Several members of the AHI team attended and participated in the Society of Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (SVEPM) 2023 Conference, in Toulouse, France at the end of March. Carla Gomes chaired a session titled 'Health and Production' while Maria Guelbenzu and Jonas Brock presented two posters. One of the posters, 'IBR Eradication in Irish Cattle, Questions & Answers' presented by Jonas Brock won a prize at the conference. The conference was an opportunity to expand AHI's network within Europe and to learn about activities in other European countries in the area of animal health and in particular work on national disease control and eradication programmes.



Jonas Brock, second from the left with his certificate for 'Best Poster' at SVEPM Conference.



**Events and Media**

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

## **Animal Health Ireland training**

### **Parasite Control TASAHA training**

In December 2022, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine announced the continuation of the Parasite Control TASAHA for a second year for all cattle and sheep farmers. As a result, we were in a position to offer additional training to those veterinary practitioners who expressed an interest in training, especially as a considerable number of them had already completed the online Stage 1 training. In January and February, we held two Stage 2 parasite control TASAHA in person training sessions and we are planning a further two training sessions in April.

### **Cell Count Solutions TASAHA training**

Following evaluation of the pilot Cell Count Solutions TASAHA training delivered in 2022 and the initial stages of the on-farm delivery of consults, DAFM has agreed to extend the provision of this service into 2023 which provided us with the opportunity to offer additional training to service providers working in the industry. As a result, we held two Stage 2 training sessions in January and February. For those who have registered, Stage 1 training for Cell Count Solutions continues to be available on Moodle and it is our intention to hold a further five Stage 2 training sessions from the end of April through to June.

### **Training with DAFM Veterinary Inspectors**

Animal Health Ireland was approached to provide TASAHA training to Department of Agricultural, Food and the Marine veterinary inspectors. This training provided them of an understanding of the focus and delivery of a TASAHA consult undertaken by a veterinary practitioner, enabling them to conduct audits on a cohort of veterinary practices, as required under the RDP programme. This training was held in February in Backweston and covered the parasite control TASAHA and the pig and poultry biosecurity assessments.

### **TB TASAHA TRAINING**

We will be running a series of TB TASAHA training sessions during May. The TB Biosecurity TASAHA programme is being expanded to offer participation to 'High-risk' farms that are not currently experiencing a TB breakdown. This is in addition to the current TB TASAHA being offered to farmers following a TB breakdown.

Veterinary practitioners who previously participated in TB TASAHA training will be eligible to provide TB Biosecurity TASAHA farm visits to both categories of farms both following a TB breakdown and also those identified as 'High Risk' farms.

Training commences at 10am and concludes at 1pm. 3 CVE credits are available.

For details of the online TB Biosecurity TASAHA training see below, and to book, please [click here](#).

## Events and Media

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### AHI Training Schedule

<b>10th May</b>	TB TASA training	Online
<b>11th May</b>	Parasite Control TASA training (Stage 2)	In Person - Kilkenny
<b>17th May</b>	TB TASA training- online	Online
<b>24th May</b>	TB TASA training- online	Online
<b>25th May</b>	Parasite Control TASA training (Stage 2)	In Person - Ballinasloe
<b>30th May</b>	Poultry Biosecurity TASA training (Stage 2)	In Person - Cavan
<b>31st May</b>	TB TASA training	Online
	Cell Count Solutions training (Stage 2)	In Person - Mullingar
<b>7th June</b>	Cell Count Solutions training (Stage 2)	In Person - Portlaoise
<b>8th June</b>	Cell Count Solutions training (Stage 2)	In Person - Kilkenny
<b>14th June</b>	Parasite Control TASA training (Stage 2)	In Person - Adare
<b>12th July</b>	Parasite Control TASA training (Stage 2)	In Person - Portlaoise

## Publications

The spring edition of our Beef HealthCheck newsletter was published in March. The publication of this quarterly newsletter gave a programme update and included articles by Catherine McAloon of UCD and AHI CalfCare TWG Chair on the management of the calf at weaning, Bernadette Earley and Nicky Byrne from Grange on dairy calf to beef management while James O'Shaughnessy of DAFM and AHI Parasite Control TWG Chair looked at anthelmintic resistance and cattle worms.

In February, we introduced a new bulletin to the suite of our monthly articles in the News Sheet. In January 2023, the Hoof HealthCheck Technical Working Group was formally set up with a remit of raising farmer awareness and education in the area of prevention and treatment of lameness. A number of opportunities for farmer awareness were identified including the production of a new monthly bulletin on lameness to be incorporated into our monthly News Sheet. These will cover topics such as the effective monitoring of lameness, the economic cost of lameness, farm structure and treatments.

Our monthly News Sheet still continues to incorporate the AHI bulletin, Johne's disease bulletin and CellCheck Tip of the Month. We also continue to have our regular monthly feature in the Irish Farmers' Journal covering a wide range of topics on animal health and our LACE (Large Animal Continuing Education) article in the Veterinary Ireland Journal and our quarterly article in the industry publication, It's Your Field. These are all available on our website, [click here](#).

## Events and Media

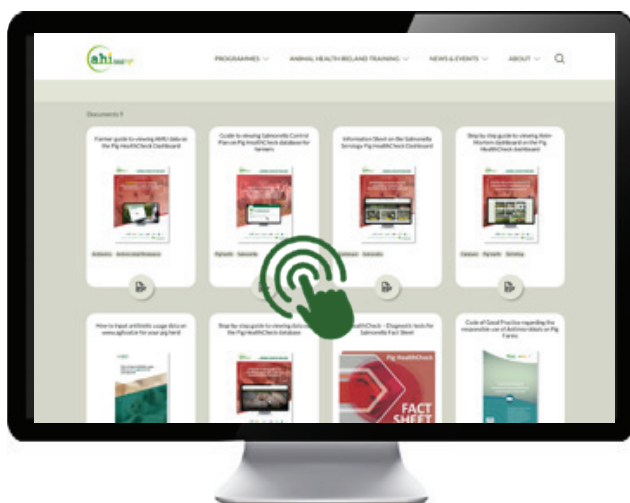
► RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE

## AHI leaflets

The AHI team continue to work on the production of new information leaflets with work focusing particularly on the new area of work being undertaken by the Pig HealthCheck programme. The following new information leaflets were produced:

- Veterinary guide to viewing antimicrobial usage data on the Pig HealthCheck Dashboard.
- Farmer guide to viewing antimicrobial usage data on the Pig HealthCheck Dashboard.

**Click here** or below to view the new guides.



All our information leaflets are available in either the Resources section of each of our programmes or in the general Resource section of our new website [click here](#)





## Programme Update

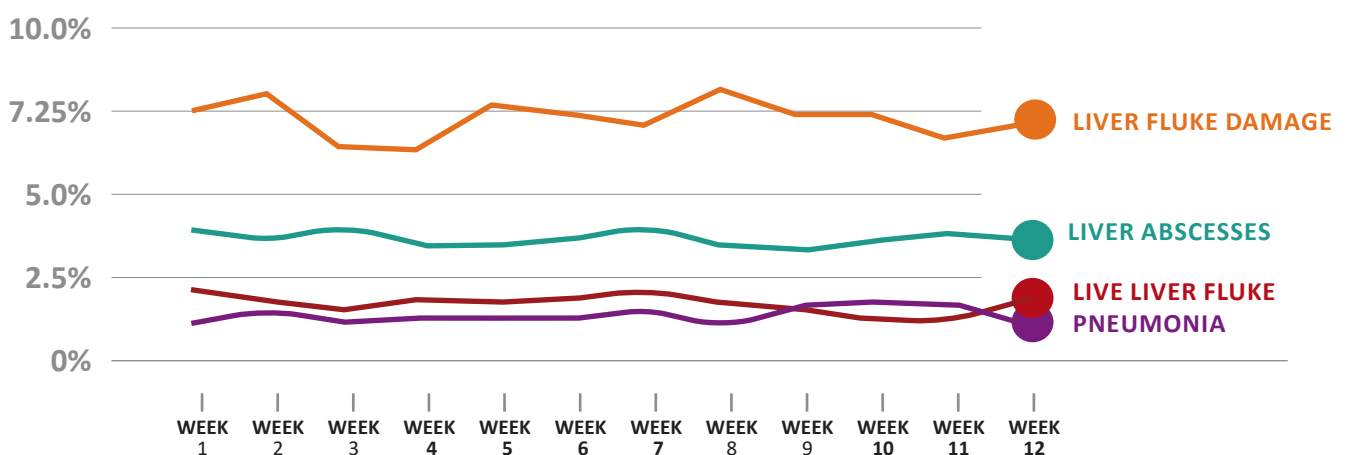
# Beef HealthCheck

Dr Natascha Meunier, Programme Manager

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

The prevalence of liver fluke at slaughter in Ireland has decreased since the Beef HealthCheck programme began recording in 2016, stabilising at a low level in recent years. Good liver fluke control at housing contributes to maintaining these low levels of liver fluke as animals will not be exposed to new parasites until turn-out. If animals were infected by liver fluke in the previous grazing season prior to housing, those parasites will now be adults that are visible at slaughter if treatment has either not been given or has not been effective. These are reported as 'live liver fluke' to farmers as part of the programme. Since the beginning of the year, live liver fluke were seen in 1.3% of cattle at slaughter, originating from 10% of the herds that sent animals to slaughter. Flukicide treatment protocols for the housing period may need to be reviewed in these herds to prevent subclinical production losses. Ensuring that there are no adult liver fluke before turn-out will also help to minimise pasture contamination with liver fluke eggs.

In 2023 to the end of March, 199,000 animals have been recorded from 11,430 unique herds as part of the Beef HealthCheck programme, with an average of 16,590 animals per week. This data is continuing to contribute to ICBF breeding values for liver fluke resistance and ICBF have developed a tool to help identify cattle for breeding that will produce offspring that are more likely to be more resistant to liver fluke. These breeding values are available for all AI bulls as well as animals that have been genotyped in Ireland and are accessible on the ICBF website and will be incorporated in health sub-indices.

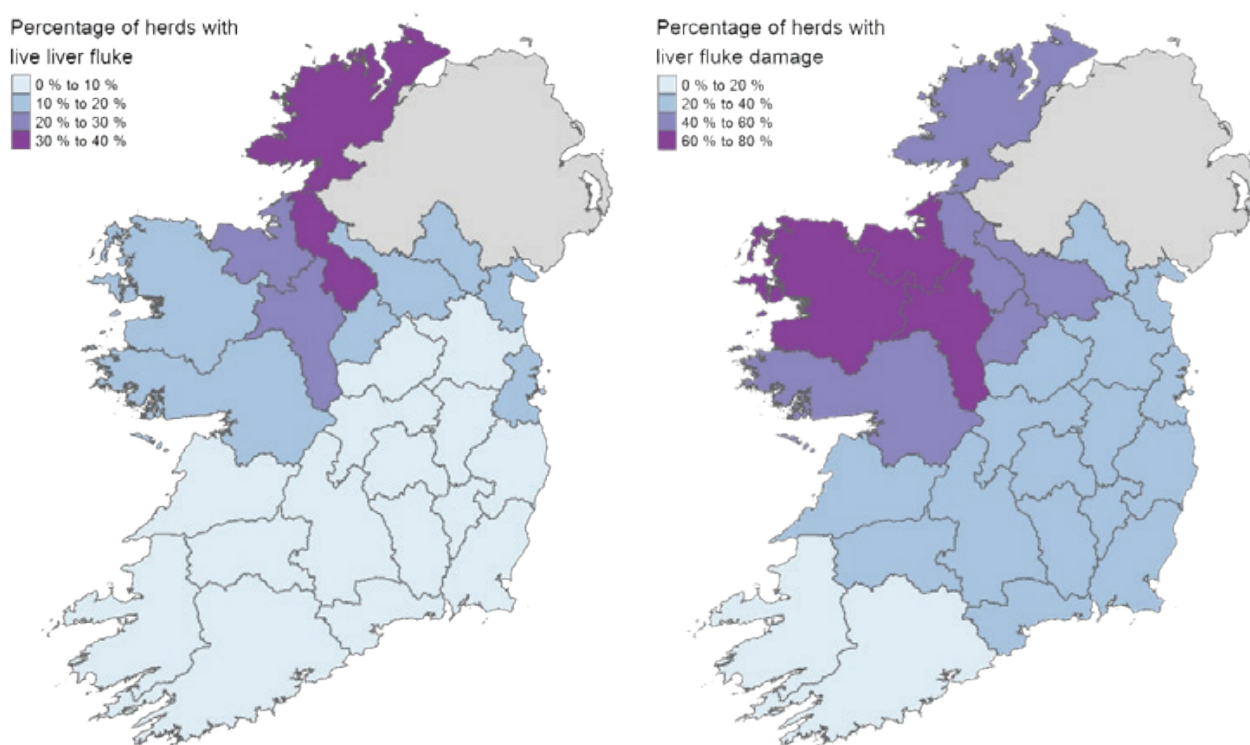


**Figure 1.** Beef HealthCheck results of health conditions seen at slaughter on a weekly basis for 2023 to date.

## Beef HealthCheck Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

During the first quarter of 2023, 68% of cattle recorded at slaughter were beef breeds with 41% steers, 32% heifers, 8% young bulls and the remainder cows and bulls. Levels of liver fluke in animals have dropped by one percent since last year for the same period to 8.5% of cattle showing any sign of liver fluke at slaughter. The percentage of herds affected is still high even though the animal level prevalence remains low, particularly in the north-western counties. The counties with the highest percentage of herds with at least one animal recorded at slaughter with fluke were Sligo, Donegal, Roscommon, Leitrim and Mayo, ranging from 66-83%. Liver abscesses this quarter were seen in 3.6% of animals and pneumonia in 1.6%, which is on a par with this period last year.



**Figure 2.** Percentage of herds with reports of live liver fluke and fluke damage per county for this quarter.



## Programme Update

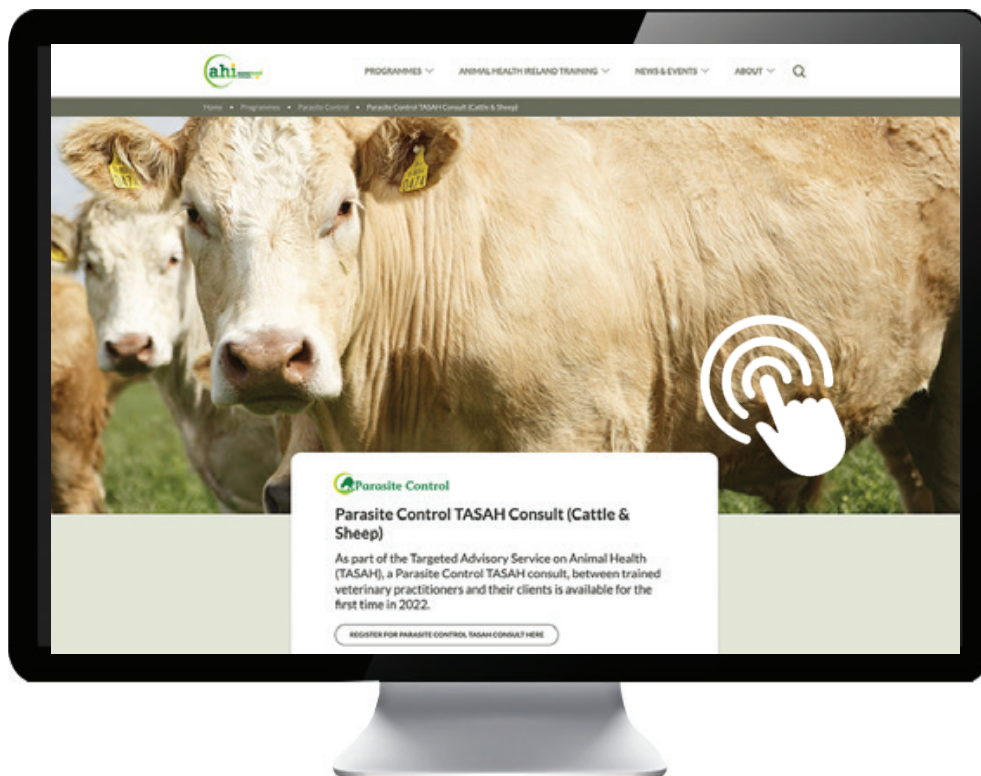
# Parasite Control

Dr Natascha Meunier, Programme Manager

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

## Parasite Control TASAH consult

Last year saw the first national Parasite Control TASAH programme for farmers and their vets. Over 16,000 farmers participated, taking advantage of a free veterinary consult and two faecal egg counts for gut worms. The programme is open again for 2023 and any cattle or sheep farmer in Ireland can take part, even if they participated last year. Farmers who have not registered previously can sign up here, [click here](#). Farmers who took part last year do not need to re-register but need to contact their vet to set up a consult to discuss parasite planning for this grazing season. If farmers wish to use a different vet this year, contact the AHI office ([pc@animalhealthireland.ie](mailto:pc@animalhealthireland.ie)). If veterinary practitioners wish to be trained to carry out a Parasite Control TASAH, a number of training sessions will be offered by Animal Health Ireland this spring [click here](#).





## Programme Update

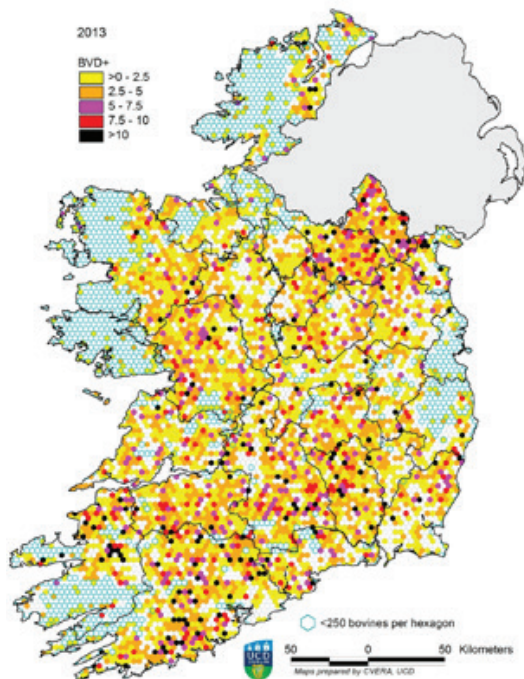
# National BVD Eradication Programme

Dr Maria Guelbenzu, Programme Manager

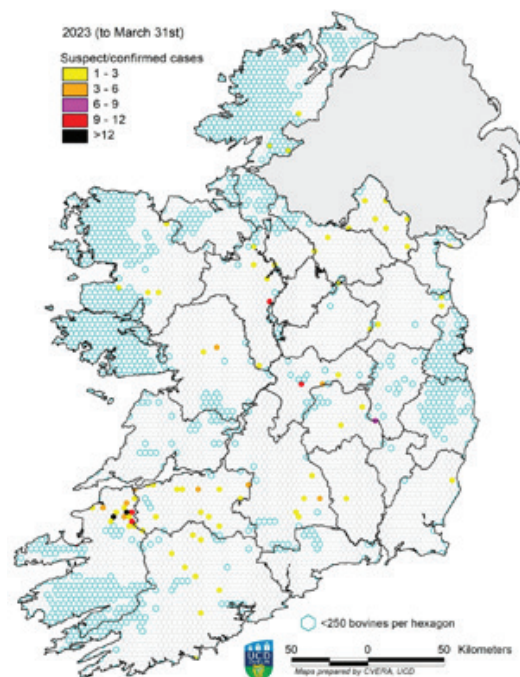
► RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE

## Results

By the end of March over 1.2 million calves had been tested, representing approximately half of the anticipated calf crop for the year. At the peak of calving (week 6) alone, 202,200 calves were registered. The prevalence of BVD virus positive (BVD+) calves' births in 2023 continues to decline, with only 0.02% of calves tested in Q1 being found to test positive to BVDV, with these being located in 0.2% of breeding herds tested to date. This represents a decrease in calf prevalence of more than thirty-fold since the start of the compulsory phase of the programme in 2013, when 0.66% of calves born were BVD+ (Figures 3, 4). Updated programme results are available on a weekly basis online [click here](#).



**Figure 3.** Map showing distribution of BVD+ births during 2013. Each hexagon represents an area of approximately 10km<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 4.** Map showing distribution of BVD suspect and confirmed cases during 2023 (to 31st March).



## BVD Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Negative herd status (NHS)

The status of almost all animals in the 83,000 breeding herds in Ireland is now known. Animals whose BVD status is not known fall into two groups. The first consists of a decreasing number of animals born before the start of the compulsory programme in 2013 that have neither been tested nor produced a calf. At the end of March the number of these animals was 135, representing 0.002% of the entire breeding herd population. The majority of these animals are in beef herds. The second group consists of 18,000 animals born after 2013 (most of those born in 2022/2023) without a valid result, with a small number that had an initial empty result and have not been retested. Therefore, it is important that these animals are tested in the coming months. Herdowners can check their herd's details in ICBF and find out the BVD status of all the animals in the herd by accessing their own account. For a full guide please [click here](#).

Herds qualify for negative herd status (NHS) by meeting the following requirements:

- Existence of a negative BVD status for every animal currently in the herd (on the basis of either 'direct' or 'indirect' results);
- Absence of any animal(s) deemed to be persistently infected with BVD virus from the herd in the 18 months preceding the acquisition of NHS.

By the end of Q1 2023, 97% of all herds and around 95% of breeding herds had acquired NHS, with a further 4,025 only being ineligible due to the presence of a small number of untested animals. While an important programme milestone for any herd, NHS also brings with it an economic benefit, with the number of laboratories that use the RT-PCR test method offering testing at reduced costs to herds with NHS [click here](#).

To facilitate the identification and testing of animals of unknown or invalid BVD status, functionality has been added to Handheld devices used by PVPs which will trigger an alert for those animals that requiring a blood sample for BVD. This functionality can be enabled as indicated in the guidance available [here](#). The BVD alerts should be turned on during TB testing so that the status of all animals is clarified and the programme moves closer to achieving BVD freedom.

### Key programme measures for 2023

The new Animal Health Law (AHL) sets out the requirements for recognition of BVD programmes and BVD-freedom at EU level for the first time. An application for recognition of the Irish BVD programme was submitted in 2022 and the programme was officially approved on the 18th of July 2022. This approval is a key milestone for the programme and a prerequisite for applying for recognition for freedom.

Outlined below are key programme messages for 2023, including measures to further accelerate progress towards freedom, with a focus on prompt testing of calves and removal of suspects, prevention of onward transmission of infection from positive herds and testing of animals of unknown status, including those born before the 1st of January 2013, to maximise the proportion of herds with NHS.

## BVD Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Key messages for all herds in 2023

In support of these goals, these focus on prompt testing of calves and increasing the proportion of herds with Negative Herd Status (NHS) by testing of animals of unknown status, including those born before the 1st January 2013 and preventing introduction of infection.

- Tissue tag testing remains compulsory for 2023.
- DAFM will provide financial support toward the cost of tagging of €2 per calf, directly to farmers based on calves registered, up to a maximum of 25 calves per herd.
- Tissue tag-test all calves as soon as possible after birth. Where positive or inconclusive tissue tag results are obtained, remove these calves promptly to obtain the higher financial support from DAFM. Confirmatory testing of these animals is no longer permitted.
- Test animals of unknown status to obtain NHS. At the end of 2022, around 3% of breeding herds contained small numbers of animals without either a valid test result or the registered birth of a negative calf. The presence of these animals prevents herds attaining NHS, accessing lower cost testing and most importantly contributing to the national target of at least 99.8% of herds having NHS. It is a legal requirement to test all animals of unknown status, including those born before 2013.
- New infections are often associated with transmission from other herds in the vicinity or introduction of pregnant dams. Review biosecurity to minimize this risk, with a focus on movement of animals (including pregnant dams), people (including the farmer) or equipment or contact across farm boundaries.

### Key messages for herds with positive or inconclusive results

- Immediate herd restriction and neighbour notification. DAFM will restrict moves both in and out. Neighbouring herds will immediately receive a biosecurity notification informing them of their increased risk, and on a monthly basis thereafter in the absence of removal of animal(s) with positive or inconclusive results. While restricted, movements out of the herd to slaughter or non-breeding herds only may be granted on a case-by-case basis under permit by the relevant Regional Veterinary Office (RVO), provided that the animals move directly to their destination.
- Isolate and remove all animals with an initial positive or inconclusive test ear notch result; re-testing is no longer permitted. Remove these promptly to obtain the higher financial support from DAFM.

#### BEEF HERDS

- » €220 for beef breed animals removed with a registered date of death on AIM within 10 days of the initial test, reducing to €30 if removed between 11 and 21 days after the initial test.

#### DAIRY HERDS

- » Dairy heifers and dairy cross animals: €160 if removed within 10 days of the initial test, reducing to €30 if removed between 11 and 21 days after the initial test.
- » €30 for removal of bull calves within 14 days of the initial test.



## BVD Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

- Cleaning and disinfection of buildings and handling facilities which may have been contaminated, as soon as practicable but in advance of the next breeding season.
- Conditions for lifting of restrictions. This requires completion of each of the following three measures by a nominated trained private veterinary practitioner (PVP), beginning at least 3 weeks after removal of the animal(s) with positive or inconclusive results, and fully funded by DAFM/RDP.
  - » Whole herd test. Blood sampling and testing of all animals in the herd.
  - » Epidemiological Investigation. Conducted under the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) within the Rural Development Programme.
  - » Vaccination of all female animals aged 12 months old and above by the nominated PVP.
- Continued herd measures. Following lifting of restrictions, herds are required to:
  - » Continue to tissue tag test for a minimum of 24 months after the removal of the last animal with positive or inconclusive results.
  - » Continue the vaccination programme in the herd in the following year, with this again delivered by the PVP and funded by DAFM.
  - » Not sell any potential trojan female i.e. that was in calf at the time of birth of the animals with positive or inconclusive results until its calf has been born and tested for BVD.

## Key messages for herds that had positive or inconclusive results in 2022

Herds that had a positive or inconclusive result in 2022 are required to undertake a second round of DAFM-funded vaccination in 2023 of all female animals aged 12 months old and above. All eligible animals are to be vaccinated before the start of the next breeding season and this may be earlier than 12 months since the last vaccination round to give sufficient time for all breeding cattle, including heifers, to complete a primary course of vaccination prior to service. Reminders will be sent to the herd owners and their nominated veterinary practitioner.


Animal Health Ireland

**BVD ERADICATION  
KEY MESSAGES 2023**



**BVD ERADICATION PROGRAMME**

The Irish BVD eradication programme has made significant progress in reducing the prevalence of virus positive animals. Currently:

- ✓ 95.8% of breeding herds and 97.2% of all herds have Negative Herd Status (NHS).
- ✓ 99.4% of bovine animals have a negative BVD status, with remainder mostly untested.
- ✓ The number of BVD suspect animals alive at the end of 2022 is historically low, with those having been found in only 22 out of 88,000 breeding herds.

The new Animal Health Law (AHL) sets out the requirements for recognition of BVD programmes and BVD freedom at EU level for the first time. An application for recognition of the Irish BVD programme was submitted in 2022 and the programme was officially approved on the 18th July 2023. This approval is a key milestone for the programme and a prerequisite for applying for recognition for freedom.

Outlined below are key programme messages for 2023, including measures to further accelerate progress towards freedom, with a focus on prompt testing of calves and removal of suspects, prevention of onward transmission of infection from positive herds and testing of animals of unknown status, including those born before the 1st January 2023, to minimise the proportion of herds with NHS.

**KEY MESSAGES FOR ALL HERDS**

In support of these goals, the focus remains on the prompt testing of calves and increasing the proportion of herds with Negative Herd Status (NHS) by testing of animals of unknown status, including those born before the 1st January 2023 and preventing introduction of infection.

- Tissue tag testing remains compulsory for 2023.
- The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will provide financial support toward the cost of tagging of €2 per calf, paid directly to farmers based on calves registered, up to a maximum of 25 calves per herd.
- Tissue tag test all calves as soon as possible after birth. Where positive or inconclusive tissue tag results are obtained, remove these calves promptly to obtain the higher financial support from DAFM. Confirmatory testing of these animals is no longer permitted.
- Test animals of unknown status to obtain NHS. At the end of 2022, around 3% of breeding herds contained small numbers of animals without either a valid test result or the registered birth of a negative calf. The presence of these animals prevents herds attaining NHS, accessing lower cost testing and most importantly contributing to the national target of at least 95.8% of herds having NHS. It is a legal requirement to test all animals of unknown status, including those born before 2023.
- New infections are often associated with transmission from other herds in the vicinity or introduction of pregnant dams. Review biosecurity to minimize this risk, with a focus on movement of animals (including pregnant dams), people (including the farmer) or equipment or contact across farm boundaries.





## Programme Update

# CellCheck

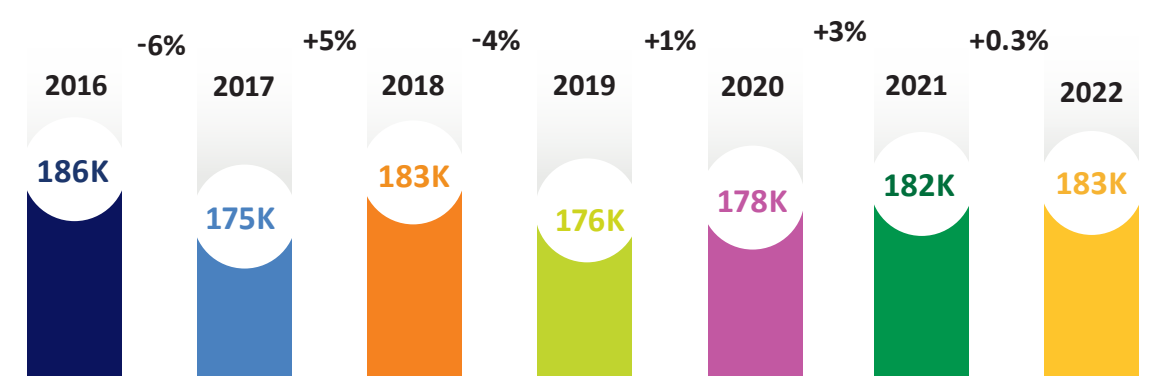
Michelle McGrath, Assistant Programme Manager

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

## National SCC data

The SCC analysis has been completed for 2022. The bulk tank average SCC for 2022 (Figure 5), is similar to 2021 at 183,000 cells/mL indicating that at a national level the improvement in SCC has plateaued over the last number of years. The analysis included data from 16,315 herds and showed that 63% of these had an SCC under 200,000 cells/mL, 35% were between 200,000 and 400,000 cells/mL and 2% of herds had an SCC over 400,000 cells/mL (Figure 6). Again, these figures are similar to 2021. There is significant variation between individual milk processors in the proportion of herds with an SCC under 200,000 cells/mL, ranging from 45%-73%. In terms of milk volume, over 8.7 billion litres of milk were supplied and for 2022 (Figure 7), 66% had an SCC of less than 200,000 cells/mL, 30% was between 200,000 and 400,000 cells/mL and 3% of this volume had an SCC greater than 400,000 cells/mL, also similar to 2021 figures. Again, there was a large variation among individual milk processors in the proportion of milk volume with an SCC under 200,000 cells/mL, ranging from 45% to 75%, with some processors getting close to the industry agreed target of 80% of milk volume below 200,000 cells/mL by 2025. Discussions are ongoing regarding data availability to provide further insights into these findings with the goal of continuing progress toward the agreed target.

### National average bulk tank SCC

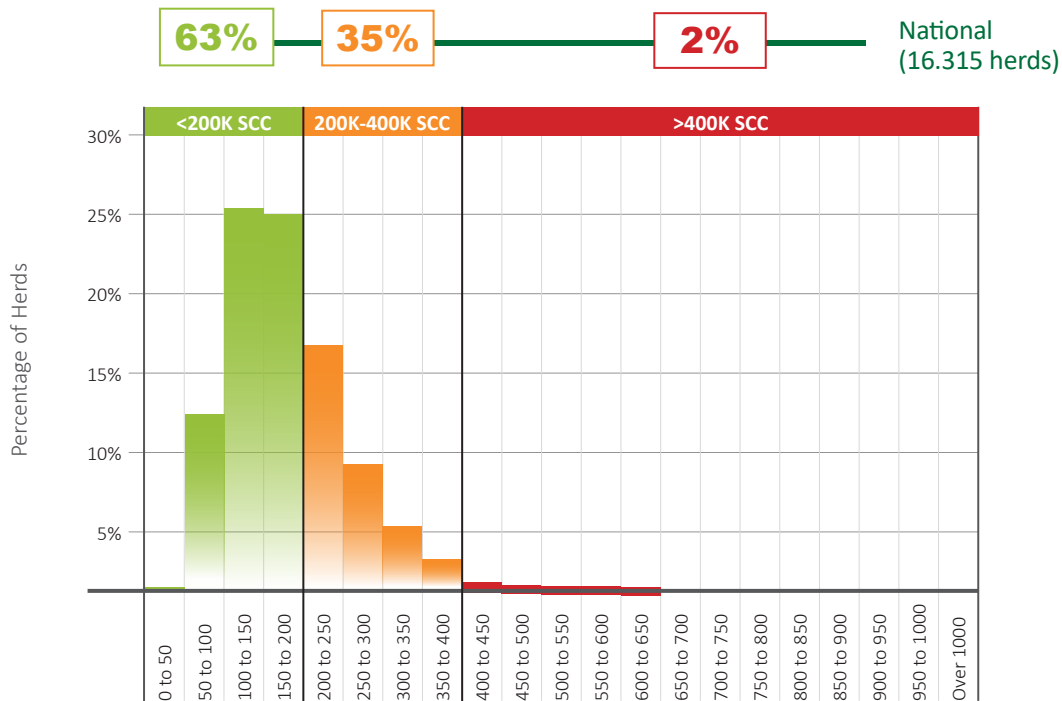


**Figure 5.** The national average bulk tank SCC, 2016-2022.

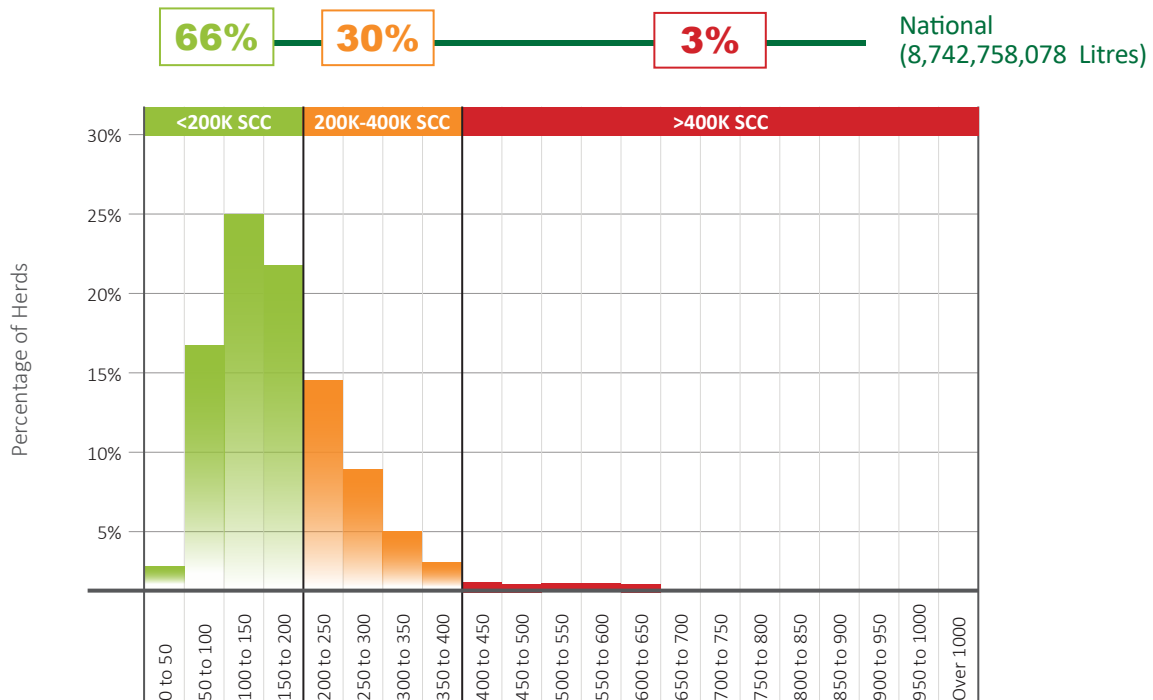


## CellCheck Programme Update

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)



**Figure 6.** National distribution of herds in each SCC category in 2022.



**Figure 7.** National distribution of milk volume in each SCC category for 2022.



## CellCheck Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Milk recording

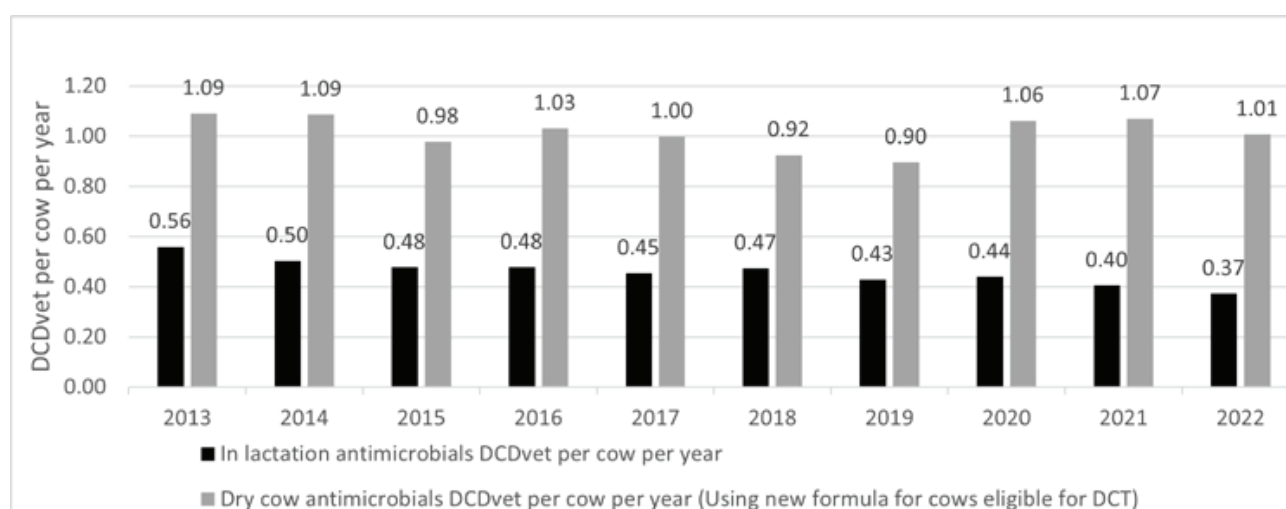
The primary milk recording target aimed for an increase of 15 percentage points in 2021 and 2022 and 5% each year thereafter to reach 90% of herds recording by 2025. In 2022, 58.6% of herds and 76.5% of cows were milk recorded which was a 9% increase from 2021. The secondary milk recording target is to increase the average number of recordings per annum from 4.5 to 6, and the average number of recordings in 2022 was 4.2, or 4.6 when herds that only did one milk recording were excluded.

### Event recording

For the first time, as a result of working closely with ICBF, preliminary figures on the recording of in-lactation and dry cow treatments are available. Both of these are important for optimizing udder health and milk quality. These indicate that in 2022 ICBF received records of mastitis treatments from 1.4% of herds and dry cow treatments from 44% of herds, online, with the relevant industry targets being 30% and 75%, respectively. Further analyses of these data are ongoing, alongside discussions on how to improve these levels.

### 2022 Intramammary sales

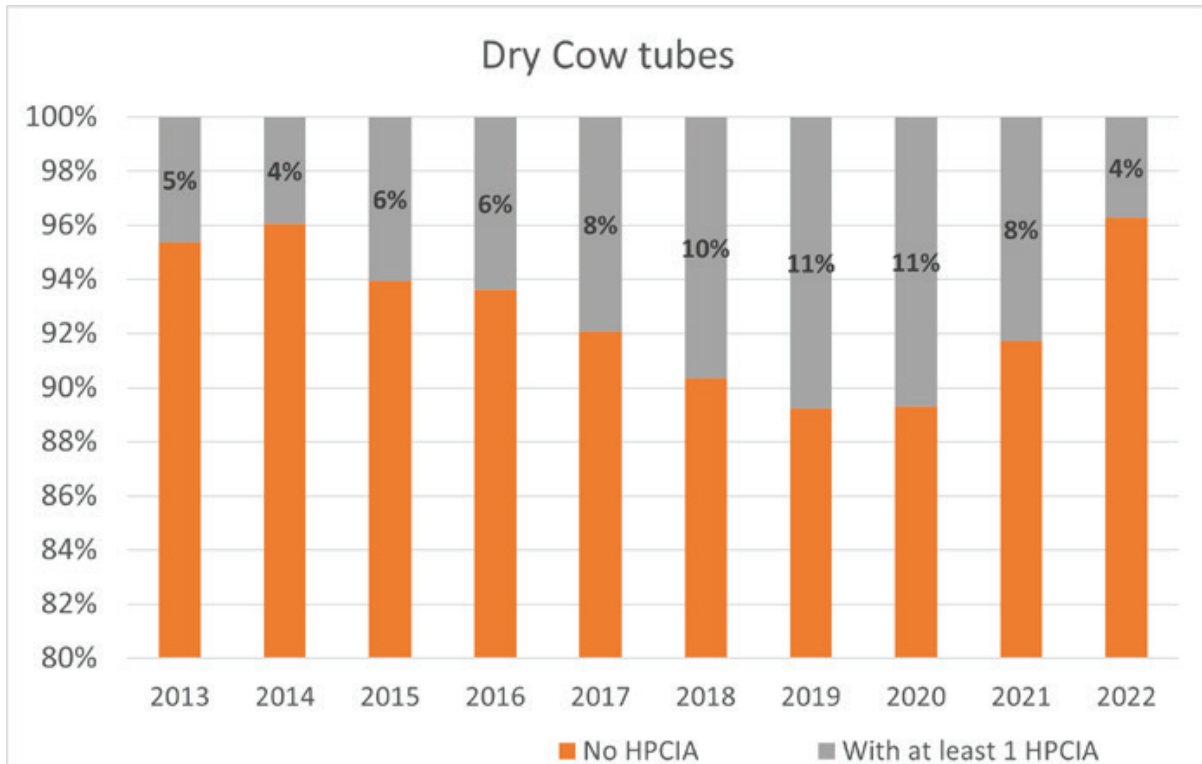
Based on sales data from Kynetec, along with additional data directly from wholesalers/manufacturers, intramammary antibiotic usage was estimated. The sales of dry cow tubes decreased slightly in 2022 but there is still enough product being sold to achieve blanket coverage (Figure 8). Continued improvement was recorded in the level of treatment with in-lactation antimicrobial tubes, reducing from 0.40 to 0.37 DCDvet/cow. The proportion of intramammary tubes sold containing a HP-CIA reduced in 2022 from 8% to 4% in dry cow tubes, and from 10% to 2% in in-lactation tubes, demonstrating further improvement from that seen between 2021 and 2022. (Figures 9 and 10).



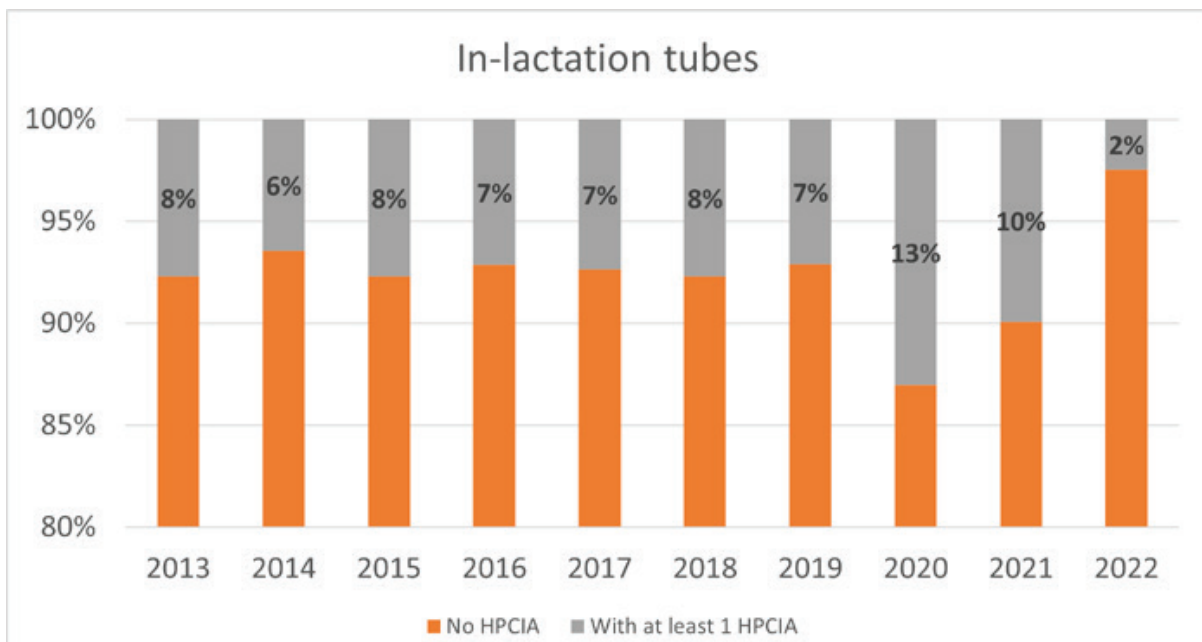
**Figure 8.** Intramammary sales data from 2013-2022.

# CellCheck Programme Update

▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE



**Figure 9.** Number of dry cow antimicrobial tubes with at least one HPCIA sold from 2013- 2022.



**Figure 10.** Number of in-lactation antimicrobial tubes with at least one HPCIA sold between 2013 to 2022.

## CellCheck Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Cell Count Solutions consult and training

---

This veterinary-led consult is targeted at herds with an SCC over 200,000 cells/mL and involves a multidisciplinary team approach that draws on expertise from different professions. The intention of the first TASAH-funded consult for each herd is to act as a kickstart to a longer-term programme and to include all the relevant professions, while having the herdowner at the centre. The training and consults were piloted in 2022 and funding has been secured for these TASAH consults in 2023.

Two Stage 2 trainings were held at the end of January and registration for consults are now open and [click here](#) to register for the consult. Further details and promotional material are available on the AHI website, [click here](#). All stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the programme and where possible identify farmers who would benefit from participating.

In addition to Cell Count Solutions training, training is also being planned on milking machines, following feedback that from participants in the pilot Cell Count Solutions training that identified this as a knowledge gap. This training will be available to service providers wishing to improve their understanding of how milking machines work and interact with the cow, and how this can affect mastitis. Details will be available shortly.

### Milk recording engagement

---

To help encourage milk recording in general but particularly a first recording within 60 days of calving, for this lactation, a milk recording booklet has been finalised on the importance of milk recording. Processors have agreed to circulate this to their milk suppliers, [click here](#).

Articles on CellCheck related issues appear regularly in the farming and veterinary media with the most recent on mastitis control around calving in the Spring edition of 'Its Your Field'. An overview of the CellCheck programme will be given to Dairy Business Students at Moorepark shortly. Work is also ongoing in developing research proposals with colleagues from UCD and Teagasc in relation to the effects of selective dry cow therapy and this includes collaboration with European colleagues.

Finally, the CellCheck team would like to welcome Finola McCoy back from maternity leave, where she has resumed her role as CellCheck Programme manager and to thank Tom McTague for his help during her leave.

## Programme Update

# National IBR Eradication Programme

Dr Maria Guelbenzu, Programme Manager

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

The first quarter of 2023 has been a busy period for this programme with several meetings taking place.

## IBR Implementation Group

The IBR Implementation Group met during the first quarter of 2023. This group includes representatives from the processing sectors, DAFM, farm organisations, breed societies and Teagasc. At that meeting a proposal for a national IBR eradication programme was presented. The proposal, developed by the IBR Technical Working Group, has been designed taking into consideration the recently introduced European Animal Health Law, with the goal of acquiring recognition for the programme in due course and thereafter recognition of freedom. Available data suggest that around 80 per cent of breeding herds in Ireland have some level of infection. Therefore, the programme envisages an initial reduction phase to decrease the proportion of herds with IBR in the country whilst recognising herds that meet a set of requirements as free. During this phase it is proposed to apply an initial test to determine the herd status, which would consist of a bulk tank milk test in dairy herds. DAFM is currently undertaking national bulk tank milk surveillance which can provide cost-effective guidance to dairy herds on next steps, with use of targeted blood sampling in suckler herds providing similar information. This phase would be followed by an eradication phase, with ongoing review and refinement of the programme. Vaccination, biosecurity and testing are key elements of the proposed programme.

The Implementation Group raised a number of questions based on the presentations, and these are currently being addressed by the TWG in advance of convening a further meeting of the IBR IG. The overall objective of this group will be to decide on the merits or otherwise of implementing a national IBR Programme.

## IBR Technical Working Group

During this quarter the IBR Technical Working Group met on three occasions to finalise the presentation of the proposal for a national IBR programme to the IBR IG and to discuss how to address the questions raised at the IBR IG meeting through the modelling work.







## Programme Update

# Irish Johne's Control Programme

Liam Doyle Programme Manager

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

## Completion of programme year 2022 activities

At the end of 2022 there were 2,109 herds registered in the IJCP, comprising 2,086 dairy and 23 beef herds. The results for 2022 are that 1,233 (59%) of dairy herds in the programme completed both annual requirements of whole herd testing and VRAMPs to meet the conditions for payment of herd testing assistance by milk processors (where relevant). 408 (19%) dairy herds were inactive in 2022, and a further 445 (21%) undertook some but not all of the WHT and VRAMP requirements. Of the 371 dairy herds who were not required to complete a VRAMP in 2022 106 (29%) either only partially completed or did not start their whole herd test.

### WHOLE HERD TEST

	VRAMP	Completed	Incomplete	Not started	Total
Dairy	Y	968 (46%)	116	118	1,202
	R	265 (13%)	33	73	371
	N	29	76	408 (19%)	513
	Total	1,262	225	599	2,086
Beef	Y	5	0	0	5
	R	0	0	0	0
	N	11	0	7	18
	Total	16	0	7	23
Total		1,278 (60%)	225 (11%)	606 (29%)	2,109

**Table 1.** Completions of VRAMP and WHT in 2022 programme year.

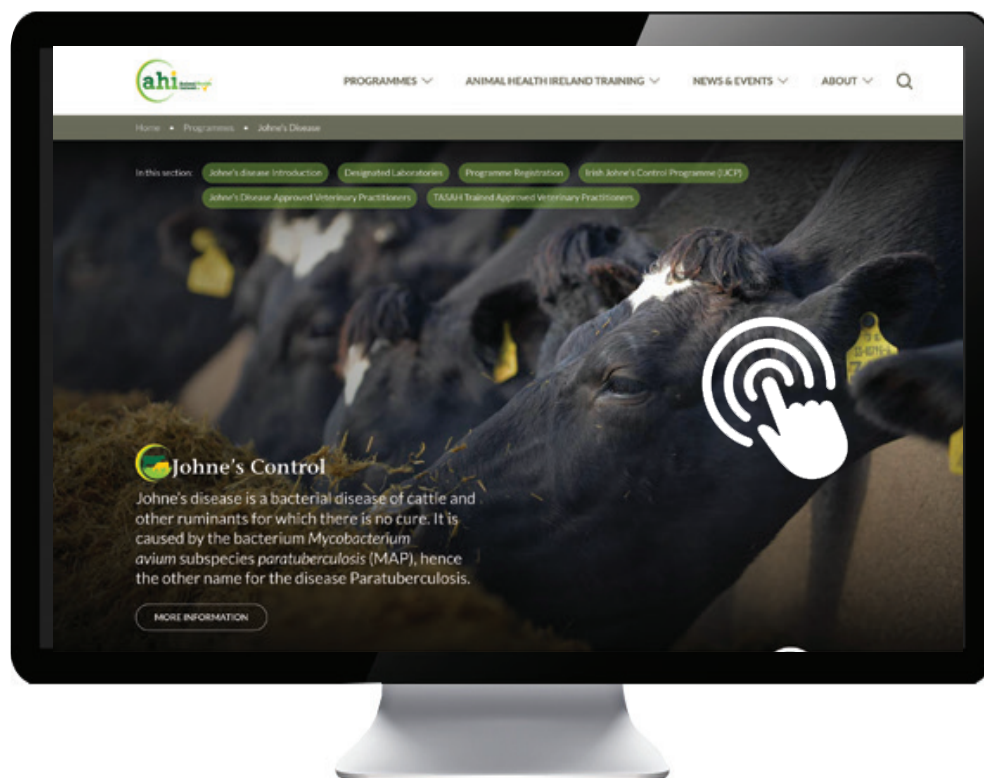
At the end of December 2022, 850 of herds had completed both the WHT and VRAMP; therefore 383 (18%) dairy herds benefitted from the extension of the programme year until the end of January to meet the payment conditions.

## Johne's disease Programme Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### Programme review

2022 marked the end of Phase 2 of the IJCP, covering the period 2019-2022. A detailed review by the Technical Working Group of all aspects of Phase 2 is now underway. This will be presented to the Implementation Group in the coming weeks and will form the basis of discussions that will determine the structure of the next phase of the programme.



## Programme Update

# Pig HealthCheck and Poultry

Dr Carla Gomes, Programme Manager

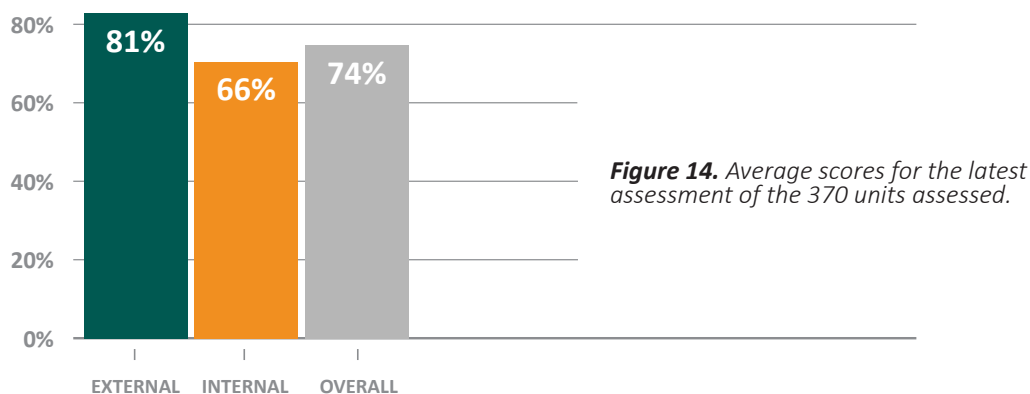
► RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE

## Database

The Pig HealthCheck web application is accessible at <https://www.pighealthcheck.ie> or through the AHI website. This web application currently allows farmers to access their biosecurity and tail biting risk assessments, the ante mortem results of their pigs sent to slaughter, the farm Salmonella scores and to benchmark their results against other farms. It also allows PVPs to input the biosecurity, tail biting risk and Salmonella assessments directly into the database. The AHI website has several videos and guides for farmers on how to access their data, [click here](#). The next dashboards to be displayed in the web application are the antimicrobial usage (AMU) dashboards. These will be available from the end of March and will show the unit antimicrobial usage, compare the usage over time and benchmarking it against other units' usage. These dashboards will only be available for units that have shared their data with the Pig HealthCheck programme. If a farmer wants to share their AMU data with the programme, he/she can do it by going to the AMU online service of the AMU DAFM database.

## Biosecurity assessments

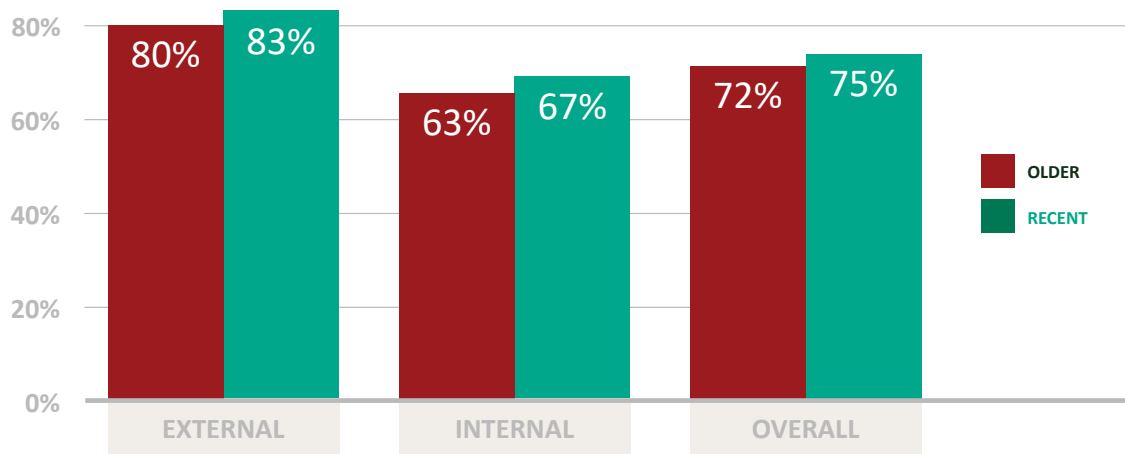
As of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 370 units (almost 100% of the herds with more than 100 pigs in Ireland) have been reviewed in terms of their biosecurity. External biosecurity continues to score higher than internal biosecurity for these herds (Figure 14).



## Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

[▶ RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

Of the 370 units assessed up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, 235 units have done at least two biosecurity assessments. For these units, there was an overall improvement in their internal, external and overall biosecurity scores between visits.



**Figure 15.** Average biosecurity scores for the 217 units assessed more than once over time.

## Risk assessments for tail biting

Rearing of pigs with intact tails is not a simple task. Carrying out a risk assessment to identify the risk factors present on farm is the first step in the journey to rearing pigs with intact tails. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 694 assessments had been completed for 371 units. These cover almost 100% of the pig herds with more than 100 pigs in Ireland. In around 95% of the farms assessed, one or more risks for tail biting have been identified. These assessments show that provision of adequate environmental enrichment is the main area that requires improvement and the percentage of pens overstocking per farm is decreasing over time. 218 of the 371 units have been assessed more than once. Improvements were observed in the management of the risks associated with animal health and competition issues.



## Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

► [RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE](#)

### *Salmonella*

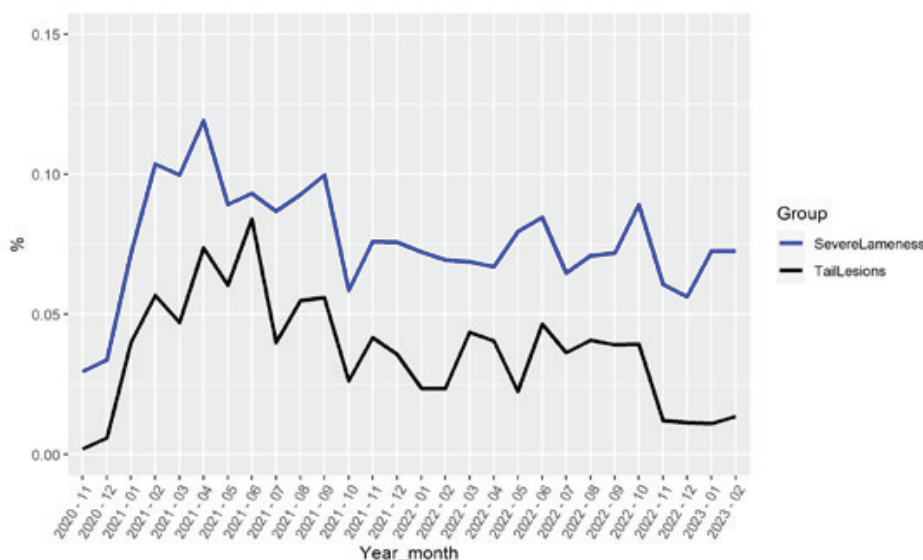
A new *Salmonella* TASA activity has been developed to draw up farm-specific control plans. The activity includes the collection of environmental samples from finishing pens and supplementary management information by the farm's attending veterinary practitioner (PVP) when carrying out the biosecurity assessment. The samples will be tested, and if *Salmonella* Typhimurium or monophasic *Salmonella* Typhimurium is detected, further sampling will be done by the PVPs in other sections of the farm to identify the areas contaminated with these strains. All this information will be used to develop the farm's control plan for *Salmonella*, which will be drawn up by the PVP in agreement with the farmer. This TASA activity is free-of-charge for farmers. The activity is fully funded for the farmer. The culture results will NOT be available to factories, nor will they be used to categorise farms for slaughter.

The Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASA) funds trained private veterinary practitioners (PVPs) to deliver annual biosecurity assessments, risk assessments for tail biting and the new *Salmonella* TASA free-of-charge. A list of trained PVPs is available on the programme webpage [click here](#). Herdowners should contact their attending veterinary practitioner to avail of this service. The biosecurity and tail biting risk assessment are part of Bord Bia pig meat Quality Assurance Scheme standards.

### Ante mortem data

Ante mortem data from pig slaughtered in the main pig factories started being recorded electronically in November 2020. These data are now being routinely transferred to the Pig HealthCheck database and farmers can log in to see their results per batch and to benchmark them against the national average.

From November 2020 to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023, 7, 844,578 pigs from 646 different herd numbers were slaughtered. Severe lameness was the most frequent condition detected at ante mortem, albeit with very low incidence (0.08%) followed by tail lesions (0.04%). The incidence of these lesions varied over the reported period (Figure 16).



**Figure 16.** Graph showing incidence of severe lameness (blue line) and the incidence of tail lesions (black line) at ante mortem inspection from November 2020 to February 2023.

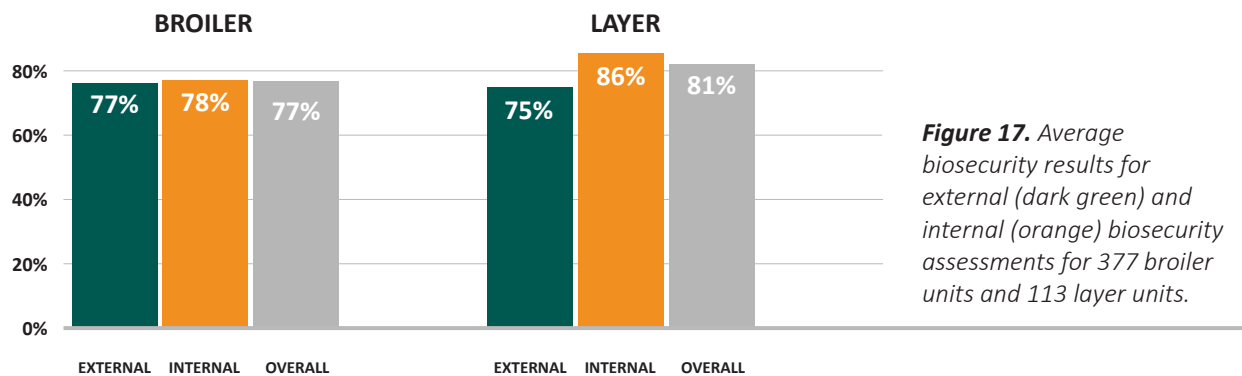
## Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

► RETURN TO CONTENTS PAGE

### Poultry Update

Good biosecurity is paramount to keeping flocks protected from disease threats such as avian influenza. The Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) funds trained PVPs to deliver annual biosecurity assessments, using the Biocheck tool developed by the University of Ghent, free-of-charge to commercial poultry owners. A list of trained PVPs is available [here](#). Flock owners should contact one of these PVPs to avail of this service.

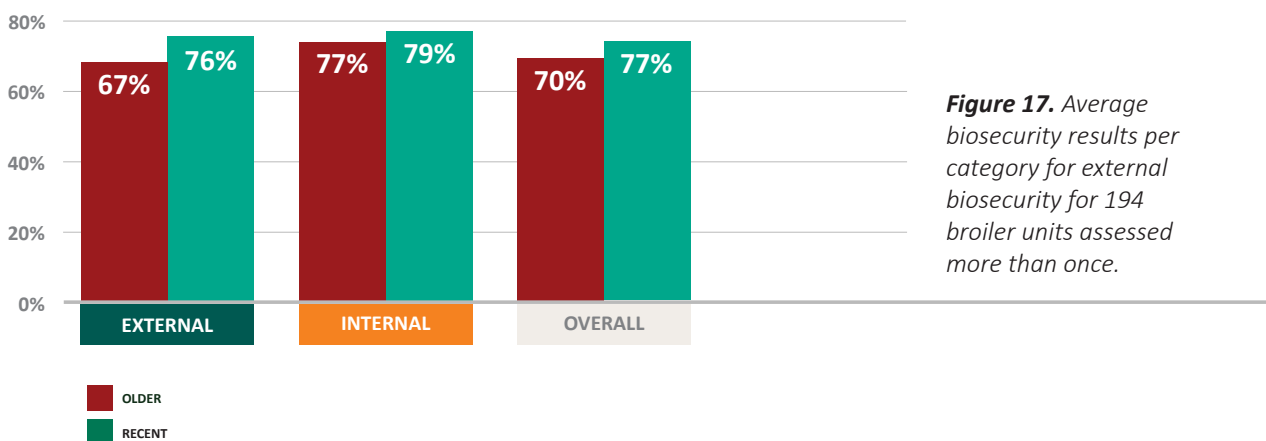
As of the beginning of March 2023, 377 units (705 surveys) had been reviewed in terms of their biosecurity for broilers and 113 units (161 surveys) for layers. Overall, internal biosecurity scores are better than those for external biosecurity in broiler and layer flocks (Figure 17).



**Figure 17.** Average biosecurity results for external (dark green) and internal (orange) biosecurity assessments for 377 broiler units and 113 layer units.

194 units of the 377 broiler units and 35 of the 113 layers units have been assessed at least twice. Improvements were observed for both external, internal and overall biosecurity scores for both production types. Noticeably, the scores for external biosecurity for broilers have improved considerably in the last year (Figure 17).

From June 2023 the biosecurity assessments will be open for poultry breeders and turkey units.



**Figure 17.** Average biosecurity results per category for external biosecurity for 194 broiler units assessed more than once.



[www.animalhealthireland.ie](http://www.animalhealthireland.ie)

*To contribute to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable farming and agri-food sector through improved animal health and welfare.*

