

# ahi

## MONTHLY NEWS

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



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# Dosing at housing

**Natascha Meunier**, Beef HealthCheck Programme Manager

**T**he major parasite problems around housing are initially liver fluke, gutworms and lungworm, and later lice, mites, and coccidia in calves. Following housing, cattle do not pick-up any new worm or fluke infections, as these occur mainly at grazing on pasture. Effective treatment at housing can therefore keep animals virtually free of worms and liver fluke until they are back on pasture in spring. It is a good time to carry out dung samples to check that your parasite control has been effective.

Health information at slaughter captured by the Beef HealthCheck programme can also be helpful to see if liver fluke are a problem on the farm. Liver fluke has been decreasing in recent years and it is possible that animals might not need a dose against them. However, 2023 has seen a particularly rainy summer, ideal conditions for liver fluke to thrive, so speak to your vet about testing and optimum treatment. Antiparasitic products can also work for more than one type of parasite, so it is important to discuss which product is best for your farm depending on the parasite control plan in your herd.

- Make sure to only use combination products if it is necessary to target multiple parasite types, e.g. use a wormer and flukicide product only if targeting both gut worms and liver fluke.
- Using a product targeting the inhibited larvae of the stomach worm *Ostertagia* at housing can reduce the risk of serious disease in late winter/ early spring. Products containing levamisole (yellow drench) are not effective against these inhibited larvae. Instead use a product from the clear drenches (macrocyclic lactones) or certain white drenches (benzimidazoles).
- If treating animals for lice and mites, make sure to treat all in-contact animals in the group. If there is a heavy infestation, a re-treatment might be needed 3-4 weeks later after the eggs hatch, as the treatments do not kill the eggs.
- When treating for liver fluke, ensure the product works for the stage of the liver fluke life cycle that is expected to be present i.e. in the first 8-12 weeks after housing either use a product that is effective against immature liver fluke or re-treat if necessary after this time. A dung sample 8 weeks after treatment at housing can be taken to check whether additional fluke treatments are needed.
- Always check the withdrawal period for finishing animals and dairy cows.

# Preparing for drying off the first job of 2024 and not the last job of 2023!

Michelle McGrath, CellCheck Assistant Programme Manager

**G**ood preparation is key to a successful drying off event. Planning should begin at least a month before you aim to start drying off. As you are aware, the new Veterinary Medicine Regulations came into effect in January 2022, meaning that farmers need to move away from 'blanket dry cow' therapy and adopt 'selective drying off strategies', which involve a more targeted use of antibiotic treatments. Only cows with evidence of infection are treated with antibiotics at drying off. Internal teat sealer should be used in the remainder of the herd as one of the measures to prevent new infections. However, to be able to do this successfully there are some key management and hygiene practices that must be in place.

## **Advance preparation that needs to be done before drying off:**

- Milk recording within a month of drying off to identify cows with a high SCC, (followed by another recording in early 2024 to evaluate the success of the dry period).
- Collect sterile samples from a selection of high SCC cows, including old, young, recently infected and chronic cows, to get a profile of the type of bacteria that are in the herd, and which antibiotics they are susceptible to.
- Arrange a consult with your vet to discuss the drying off strategy.
- Review expected calving dates, to ensure an adequate dry period is achieved (minimum 6-8 weeks, longer in young or thin cows).
- Management of production levels; where cows are yielding greater than 12 L /day in the week before planned drying off, reduce feed intake, but not water access.
- Clip cows' tails and rear udders to ensure better hygiene.
- **Avoid** skipping milkings in the days leading up to drying off- meaning cows should be dried off abruptly.

We need to remember that a selective drying off strategy is not without risk and is not something to embark on without seeking professional support. It is important that time is put aside to discuss records and the drying off procedure with your advisor and vet. As part of the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) funded through the Rural Development Plan 2014-2020, a free Dry Cow Consult, is available for eligible farmers. The purpose of the TASAH Dry Cow Consult is to enable farmers to engage with their veterinary practitioner to develop farm-specific selective dry cow strategies, where appropriate. Applications are currently open for the TASAH Dry Cow Consult and details are available on the Animal Health Ireland website: [www.animalhealthireland.ie](http://www.animalhealthireland.ie). To be eligible, the farmer must meet the following criteria:

- Average bulk milk tank SCC for the last 12 months is less than 200,000 cells/mL.
- At least 4 whole herd milk recordings in the last 12 months.

It is also time to start gathering the necessary equipment and arranging extra help that you will need at the time of drying off, as it can be a slow and tedious job. Drying off should be done separately and **not** done during milking. As the goal is to dry off the last cow as well as you did the first cow, then no more than 20 cows per person should be done on one day. Drying off cows should be avoided when the farmer is tired, hungry, or stressed. The necessary equipment needed includes:

- A clean apron.
- Head torch.
- Disposable gloves.
- Teat wipes or cotton balls and surgical spirits.
- Marker and recording notebook.
- And intramammary tubes, including teat sealers.

The importance of good hygiene cannot be over emphasised. Having a system in place for cleaning, sterilising teats and tubing and repeating for each cow is also an important part of the routine and teats should be disinfected after administering tubes. Cleaning the parlour between batches helps to maintain a clean environment.

Following drying off, keep the cows standing for a minimum of thirty minutes in a clean environment, like a nearby dry field or clean cubicles. The importance of good hygiene during the dry period should not be forgotten. Cows are susceptible to new infections particularly in the early dry period before their teats have sealed and in the 2 weeks prior to calving. Cows need to be monitored closely during these times because if mastitis is not identified promptly the cow can become very sick, very quickly.



# Lameness prevention

## The principles of foot bathing

**Muireann Conneely and Ger Cusack**, Hoof HealthCheck Technical Working Group Members

### Why foot bathe?

Foot bathing is a key part of the prevention and control of infectious lameness-causing diseases in dairy cows. It is particularly important to manage digital dermatitis (DD, also known as Mortellaro's disease), which is a painful, infectious disease that can spread rapidly through a herd and cause significant lameness problems. In a recent Teagasc study, 44% of farmers reported having DD present, yet only 31% had a regular foot bathing programme in place.

Foot baths allow a disinfectant solution to be applied to each cow's hooves at milking time, which will kill infectious agents and improve hoof hygiene. It is important to foot bath correctly. If done incorrectly, foot bathing can be completely ineffective at best, or at worst may actually contribute to the spread of disease.



## Important things to ensure when foot bathing

- Cow flow through the foot bath should be smooth. Ideally, the foot bath should be positioned near the milking parlour exit.
- The foot bath should not have any steps up or down, i.e., the bottom of the foot bath should be level with the walking passage.
- The foot bath should be wide enough. A foot bath should be a minimum of 700 – 850 mm wide. This will allow cows to pass one at a time with good cow flow. A foot bath of 3m x 850 mm works very well for herds of up to 250 cows.
- A foot bath 1.5 m wide and above will allow two cows to pass through simultaneously, and an advantage of a wide design is better cow flow. Herds larger than 250 cows should have a foot bath width of at least 2m.
- The foot bath should be long enough - a minimum of 2.5m and a maximum of 3m will allow each foot to be sufficiently immersed in the solution.
- Solution depth should be 100-125mm.
- Volume: 1 litre/cow passage. So if you have a 200 cow herd, you need a minimum of 200L of solution to foot bath the whole herd at once.

**Precast concrete footbath measuring 850 mm x 3m**



- Change solution regularly. A good rule of thumb is to allow one cow passage per litre of solution before changing. For example, a 200 litre foot bath needs the solution changed after 200 cow passages.
- To be effective, the reagents used in the foot bath must be used at the correct concentrations. To get the concentration right, you need to know the volume of the foot bath. Multiplying the length by the width by the depth of solution, measured in metres, will give the volume in cubic metres. Multiplying cubic metres by 1000 will be the volume in litres.
- Example: If you have a footbath 3 m long, 850 mm wide and with a solution depth of 100 mm, your volume will be 255L ( $3\text{m} \times 0.85\text{m} \times 0.1\text{m} = 0.255\text{m}^3$ ,  $0.255\text{m}^3 \times 1000 = 255\text{L}$ ). This will allow you to foot bathe 255 cows once, or 127 cows twice.
- Consult your vet about which foot bathing solution is best for your herd. Options include formalin, copper sulphate or other commercial products containing peracetic or organic acids. Antibiotics are not licensed for use in foot baths because this contributes to the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance, environmental contamination and ineffective treatment of underlying disease.
- The frequency with which cows need to be foot bathed depends on the prevalence and severity of the disease within the herd. It is best to consult with your vet to determine the best routine for your herd. Herds with a high prevalence of DD could need foot bathing after every milking until the disease is under control. Herds without a DD problem may not need to foot bathe at all (focusing on biosecurity measures is very important in this scenario; maintain a closed herd if possible, but if not, all bought-in animals should be foot bathed on arrival and quarantined for at least two weeks and checked regularly to ensure they are free from DD).



### Important to note!

**Foot bathing is not a substitute for the other important management practices that prevent lameness, i.e. a foot bathing programme will not solve a digital dermatitis problem if the yard and facilities are dirty and deep in slurry. Foot bathing is only one part of a larger lameness management plan!**



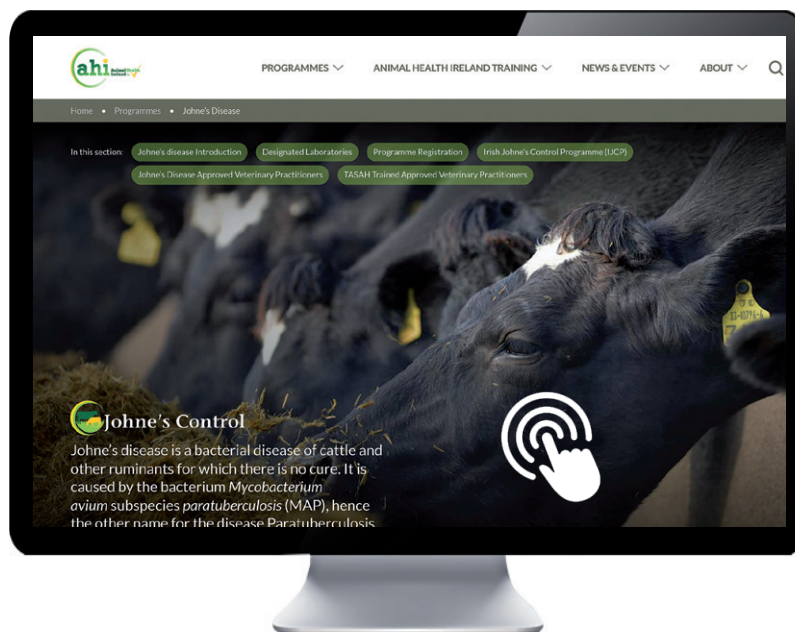
# Completing your 2023 programme requirements

Liam Doyle, Johne's disease Programme Manager

The last quarter of the year is a busy period for members of the Irish Johne's Control Programme (IJCP). Many members are taking action to complete their Whole Herd Test (WHT) and Veterinary Risk Assessment and Management Plan (VRAMP) programme requirements for 2023.

It is important that if you need a WHT and VRAMP under the 2023 programme requirements that you get these tasks arranged and completed as soon as possible. Any WHTs started but not finished should also be completed.

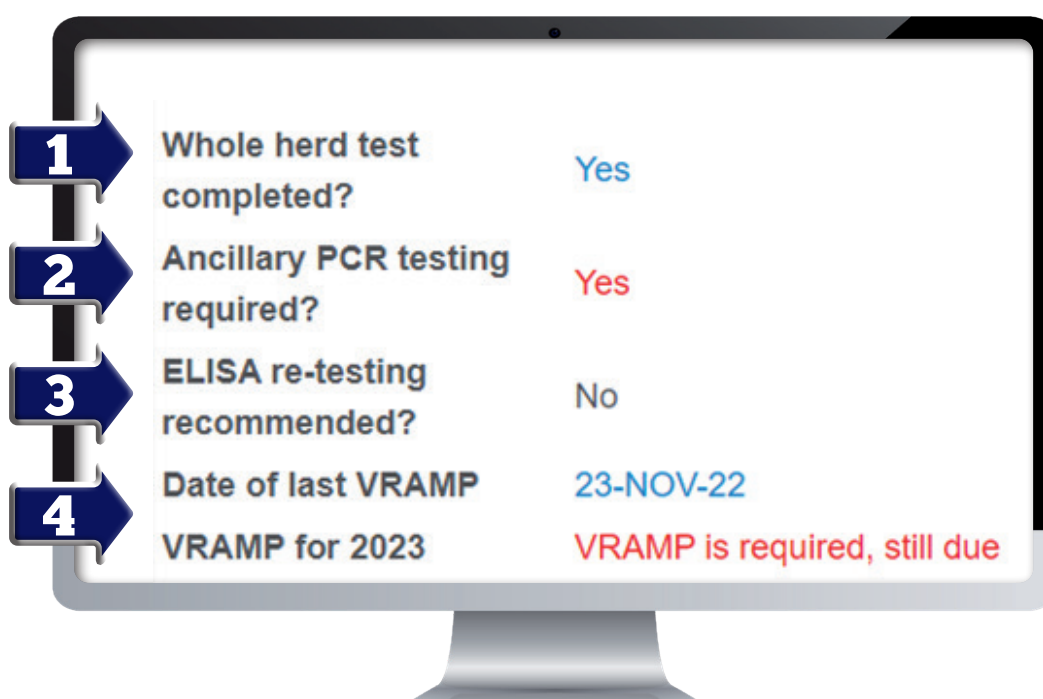
The exceptions to completing a WHT and VRAMP in 2023 are herds in their fourth and fifth year of the Test Negative Pathway (TNP). Currently there are 215 herds in the TNP year 5 pathway. Herds in year 5 TNP are not required or funded to complete either a WHT or a VRAMP. However, even with year 5 TNP herds, AHI recommend completion of these actions as part of your annual herd health activities, as it gives you valuable information at both a herd and individual animal level. With year 4 TNP herds, members are required to carry out a WHT (non-funded) but not a VRAMP. Apart from these two exceptions (year 4 and 5 TNP herds) all other herds in the 2023 programme should complete both a WHT and VRAMP.



<https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/johnes-disease/>

## How do I know as a member what is required of me in the 2023 IJCP?

If you want to know what actions you need to complete as part of the 2023 IJCP, access your Johne's homepage on ICBF, which will show you what is required. A useful guide to the IJCP homepage can be accessed at the following link [Accessing the AHI dashboards](#).



1

Whole herd test complete? – If this is “Yes” then the WHT is complete for 2023. If the WHT status is “Not Yet Completed” then the WHT has been started but not all the eligible animals over 2 years old on the farm have been tested. If the WHT status is “Not Yet Started” then the WHT for 2023 has not been commenced but needs to be arranged and completed. “NOT REQUIRED” status means the herd is year 5 TNP and is not required to test in 2023.

2

Ancillary PCR testing required? – If this is “YES” then it means you have outstanding faecal PCR testing (dung sample) required in your herd. If “YES” is present, you can click on it to get a list of animal(s) requiring testing.

3

ELISA re-testing recommended? – If this is “YES” it informs you that positive or inconclusive ELISA test samples were collected and submitted to the laboratory within 7 days after calving (for an ELISA test on a milk sample only) or within 90 days after a TB skin test (on blood or milk). In each of those scenarios, the follow-up test should be an ELISA re-test on a blood or milk sample, after the expiry of the 7-day or 90-day period, respectively.

4

VRAMP date – This tells you the date of completion for your previous VRAMP and if your 2023 VRAMP is still due. If you click on the date of your previous VRAMP the results from it can be accessed.

Along with the information available on ICBF Johne's home page, members in the programme are also being reminded if they have not completed their 2023 VRAMP or have not completed or not started their Whole Herd Test by AHI sending out mobile phone text notifications. If you receive one of these AHI text messages, please read it and act on it. More information about the Johne's programme and participation requirements are also available on the AHI website [Johne's Disease - Animal Health Ireland](https://www.animalhealthireland.ie/johnes-disease)



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