

# ORGANISE YOUR JOHNE'S HERD TEST!

Liam Doyle, Johne's disease Programme Manager

Even though poor weather nationally in the first half of 2024 has delayed many routine farm activities, it is coming to the best time of year to organise and carry out your Johne's whole herd test (WHT). Getting the WHT completed early in the season gives you added flexibility to negotiate your way through the many complex issues any farm will face before year end. The herd test is one of the vital components of the Johne's programme as it gives an indication about how likely it is that a herd is infected and it also returns important animal-level information to the farmer and their vet. These animal-level results allow risk assessments be made about the management of test positive animals, their progeny, dams and even cohort animals.

## When organising your annual Johne's Disease (JD) WHT there are several things to consider

- ✓ All cattle over the age of two years on the date the WHT is commenced are eligible for testing and if possible should all be sampled on the same day. This list of WHT eligible cattle over two-year-old in your herd can be downloaded from the ICBF Johne's web page (Figure 1- <https://johnes.icbf.com>). If you select a date for your WHT this can be inputted into the '**WHT Eligible**' input box. From this a list of eligible cattle required for a Johne's test at that date can be viewed and downloaded

The screenshot displays the ICBF Johne's website interface. On the left, a table titled '2024 Test results (by count)' shows the following data:

RESULT	04-JAN-2024 BLOOD	02-JAN-2024 BLOOD	DATE 3	DATE 4	DATE 5	DATE 6	DATE 7
ELISA NEGATIVE	90	1	0	0	0	0	0
ELISA POSITIVE	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
ELISA INCONCLUSIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
POR NEGATIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
POR POSITIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CULT NEGATIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CULT POSITIVE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

On the right side of the interface, there is a navigation menu with the following items:

- View lab results by herd
- View status of every animal
- View status of every animal enrolment (01-JAN-24)
- View all results in selected year
- Investigate
- Purchase History
- JHI

Two callout boxes highlight specific features:

- A box at the top right shows 'WHT Eligible: 20-May-24'.
- A box at the bottom right shows 'WHT Eligible: 20-May-24' and 'Johne's herd summary report'.

**Figure 1.** Obtaining your greater than two-year-old herd list of JD test eligible cattle, from the Johne's home page on ICBF.

- ✓ It must be at least six months (180 days) since the start of the previous round of Johne's testing on the farm.
- ✓ If milk recording is used on the farm this is a labour and cost saving method to carry out the bulk of your annual Johne's testing. It should be organised through your milk recording organisation (MRO). It is also recommended to test samples collected during milk recording during mid lactation (May to September).
- ✓ When using milk samples for Johne's testing, avoid taking these within seven days of calving and also with milk samples avoid the later stages of lactation (last couple of months). In both these situations there tends to be increased levels of what are considered to be false positive results. Any increase in level of false positive results can confuse interpretation of the overall herd results meaning that it may be more difficult to pick out the higher risk animals.
- ✓ Always keep an eye to your TB test as Johne's testing cannot be carried out within 90 days after cattle are injected, on the first day of a TB test. If herds are in a situation where they are undergoing frequent TB testing then they should contact their vet; as with special permissions in these circumstances the Johne's herd test may be carried out after 60 days.

Herd testing is an important part of the Johne's control programme but must be used in conjunction with other essential measures for reducing spread of Johne's disease and will also protect against other calf diseases. These include early removal of high-risk animals, attention to hygiene at calving and in calf pens, early separation of calves after calving, hygienically feeding colostrum and milk from low-risk cows, and protecting replacement calves and heifers in sheds and on pasture from exposure to dung and slurry from adult cattle.

Also, separately in an update to delivery of the Irish Johnes Control Programme (IJCP) starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2024 the requirement to complete ancillary faecal testing (ANC) in JD ELISA inconclusive cattle from IJCP herds will be removed. (Note: It is only IJCP herds where JD has not been confirmed that ANC confirmatory testing takes place. Once there is confirmation of JD in an IJCP herd no further ANC testing is required.)

This means on completion of a Johne's WHT the only animals which ICBF will select to be put forward for ANC (faecal) testing and printed on the "Faecal ANC Samples Required Form" will be positive result ELISA animals. This means that the present procedure where the vet prints off their "Faecal ANC Samples Required" list from ICBF, before going to the farm to faecal sample animals will not change. The only difference is that the printed list containing the animals to be sampled will include only animals with positive ELISA results.

The reason this change is being implemented in the IJCP is that programme data has shown that inconclusive ELISA results are not an effective use of resource to determine the JD infection status of a herd. Rather, the JD infection status of a herd is much more likely to be determined through ANC testing of the ELISA positive animals disclosing in a herd test.

**For more information about controlling Johne's disease, speak to your veterinary practitioner or refer to the IJCP webpages, [Click here](#).**