ANIMAL HEALTH IRELAND

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

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Press Release
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AHI launches new Irish Johne's Control Programme

Johne's Diseases costs dairy industry up to €23m/year

New Programmes to support farmers on Johne's journey

A new programme aimed at the control of Johne's Disease (JD) on Irish farms has been launched by Animal Health Ireland (AHI).

The programme, which has been developed by the Johne's Disease Technical Working Group (TWG) and approved by the Implementation Group (IG), is aimed at supporting beef and dairy farmers in controlling a difficult and costly disease.

Johne's Disease is a chronic, incurable and ultimately fatal condition that slowly wastes cattle, draining their condition, fertility and milk yield while spreading silently through a herd for years before the first animal ever looks sick.

JD is estimated to cost the Irish dairy industry between €11.24m and €23.85m per year driven mainly by lost milk yield, premature culling and reduced cull value.

The aim of the new programme is to support farmers to effectively control JD while offering a progression plan for each registered IJCP herd to improve its Johne's health status over time.

The new IJCP has three key components each designed by the TWG to inform, educate and support farmers: take control of the situation:

- The Herd-Level Report: This shows the farmer where their herd stands overall, pulling the whole herd's Johne's picture over a period of time into one clear view.
- Individual Animal Report: This drills down to animal level, flagging the specific cows and bulls causing concern so they can inform testing, management and culling decisions.
- Johne's Progression Report: This tracks the herd's journey over time, showing how it is advancing through the programme against its own targets.

Farmers who are eligible to join the programme will also receive free veterinary support through the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) to guide them on their journey.

Dr Liam Doyle, Johne's Disease Programme Manager at AHI said:

"Johne's Disease is one of the most serious, debilitating and costly diseases affecting Irish livestock farms. Once it makes its way into a herd it will lead to wasting of individual animals, but it is the unseen impact it has on many other areas such as fertility, lameness, mastitis and yield where it really impacts. Although incurable, Johne's Disease is something that can be controlled through patient and strategic management of the disease.

"At AHI, we have worked diligently with the TWG to develop an ambitious new Irish Johne's Control Programme that will support farmers who are impacted and empower their vets to aid them on this journey. There is a huge

prize for farmers and the entire agri industry to be involved in the new IJCP; healthier herds, improved profitability and an enhanced reputation."

Prof Conor McAloon, Chair of the Johne's Disease TWG said:

"Johne's Disease does not develop dramatically in your herd, in fact unchecked it will spread slowly and progressively over years. For every sick animal, many more are infected without a farmer even knowing. This is the basis for the work we have done as a TWG in developing a new Control Programme that will last the test of time and support an industry that needs to effectively tackle the disease.

"From best management practices at the early stages of a calf's life to strategic advice around testing and cow management, the new IJCP is a real gamechanger as we all work together to control the prevalence in herds. By showing the leadership now, we can leave a long-lasting legacy that ensures this and subsequent generations will have healthier and more productive herds, something which is key to our €20bn agri-food export sector."

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