



# Newsletter

## December 2020



### Happy Christmas from all of us at Orchard Vets

Whilst wishing you all a very merry Christmas, we appreciate that animals don't always respect public holidays. As well as having a vet on duty 24/7 over the festive period, the office opening hours are:

Christmas Eve 8am - 4pm

Christmas Day and Boxing Day - Closed

27<sup>th</sup> December 10am - 1pm

New Year's Eve - 8am - 4pm

New Year's Day - Closed

All other days we are open as usual

### Johne's control plan declarations

The deadline for this year's Johne's control plan declaration is fast approaching. It was put back from the end of October to the end of December due to Covid.

As a reminder, this is now a requirement for Red Tractor dairy farms as well as most milk buyers. As an absolute minimum, you will need to have tested 30 high risk cows within the past year (usually via milk samples), and have one of us review your results, assess your risks and produce you a plan before we can issue your certificate. As the test results can take a couple of weeks to come back, if you haven't done this yet, you need to take action now.

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**J** ACTION **HNE'S**

BCVA Accredited  
Johne's Veterinary Adviser

## Johne's disease

Johne's disease is a chronic wasting disease of adult cattle and sheep caused by *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (*MAP*). The main signs in cattle are progressive weight loss and chronic scour. Diagnosis and control are difficult. If your herd has no history of Johne's disease it is critical that all measures are taken to prevent introduction of infection because eradication of disease once prevalent in the herd proves very costly and may take many years.

There is limited but disputed evidence that the organism may be associated with Crohn's disease in humans.

### Economic Importance

It is estimated that Johne's disease affects around two thirds of UK herds. In infected herds the annual culling/mortality rate may be 1 to 5%. However, losses due to subclinical disease (weight loss, reduced milk yield; poor fertility) are also substantial.

### Causes

The disease occurs worldwide and affects particularly cattle, sheep, goats and deer reared in intensive systems. Many wildlife, including rabbits, and exotic species are also susceptible to Johne's disease.

The disease is mainly transmitted to young calves by ingestion of the organism in faeces of infected animals contaminating food, water and the cow's teats. There is a long incubation period and clinical disease is not usually apparent until three to five years-old although younger cases are possible. Infected animals may shed organisms in the faeces for over a year before clinical signs appear.

### Early Clinical Signs

Look for diarrhoea, poor milk yield and weight loss in cattle three to five years-old with onset often following calving or other stressful event (sale, transportation etc). There is no fever and the animal maintains a good appetite until the terminal stages. Clinical signs may continue for several months with the cow/bull becoming emaciated, and then being culled for economic/welfare reasons

### Control and Prevention

There is no single reliable test for confirming Johne's disease during the early stages of disease. Blood and milk tests detect antibodies to crude *M.paratuberculosis* antigen but not all cases have a detectable antibody response. In practical terms diagnosis is best done using a combination of serial blood/milk tests and faecal examination for the organism.

### Control:

Control is difficult because of the long incubation period, shedding of infection by animals before they show clinical signs, and poor detection rates of tests in the early stages of disease.

Eradication requires a substantial commitment. Testing and culling animals is not enough, the spread also needs to be limited. Practical control measures that can readily be adopted to limit losses in a diseased herd include:

- Rapid culling of diseased animals.
- Minimise faecal contamination of food, water and pasture e.g. by raising feed and water troughs, strip grazing, use of mains/piped water rather than surface/pond water, avoiding spreading yard manure on pasture, and maintaining good hygiene in buildings/yards and calving boxes in particular
- Separate newborn calves from dams at birth and rear by bucket with artificial colostrum/milk (only possible for dairy calves).
- Do not feed waste milk to calves
- Do not raise calves from known infected dams as breeding replacements.
- Re-stock only from accredited herds especially bulls.

