



This consultation document from the Action Group on Johne's seeks industry views on Phase II of the National Johne's Management Plan.

1. Action Group on Johne's

The Action Group on Johne's is the stakeholder forum for dairy industry organisations concerned with tackling Johne's disease. In addition to milk purchasers the members of the Action Group include:

AHDB	NFUS
APHA	NMR
BCVA	Park Vet Group
CIS	RAFT Solutions
FUW	Red Tractor
MyHealthyHerd	SAC
NFU	West Ridge Vet Practice

The Action Group developed the National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP).

Phase I of the NJMP, which formally started on the 1st April 2015, primarily focused on education and engagement.

The Action Group is now seeking views on how tackling the disease can be taken forward in Phase II which will start from October 2016.

2. Context

The Action Group on Johne's is of the view that in the current industry context it would be appropriate to continue to move forward industry efforts to tackle Johne's disease. If anything, the need to control the disease is increasing.

- ***Prevalence***

Over 80% of herds that have undertaken surveillance for Johne's disease have evidence of infection. The level of disease within individual herds varies. The majority of herds have fewer than 5% high risk cows but it is not unusual to identify herds with greater than 20% of high risk cows.

- ***Economic Impact***

Johne's disease remains a significant economic challenge for the UK dairy industry.

Johne's disease causes a severe economic impact on the performance of a dairy herd if it is allowed to spread. Johne's disease will cause a reduced yield in affected

animals, greater associations with other diseases, such as mastitis, and increased risk of premature culling. Johne's disease costs can rise to in excess of 1-2p/ litre with higher disease incidences and these costs remain for a number of years until the disease is brought under control.

- ***Animal Welfare***

Johne's disease poses a major obstruction to achieving higher standards of animal welfare. Infected herds pose a risk to other herds through the sale of stock and herd dispersals. A unified and structured approach is required which not only reflects the need of individual farms but also that of the wider industry. The benefits of managing Johne's disease often extend beyond Johne's. For example, improved management around calving can lead to improved calf health.

- ***Endemic Disease Control***

Tackling Johne's will also help to reinforce the industry's efforts on endemic diseases, particularly BVD and TB.

The principles for controlling Johne's are identical to that required by BVD Free of:

- **Assessing the level of biosecurity and disease risk on farm**
- **Defining the disease status of the herd**
- **Action plan for control on farm**
- **Monitoring progress**

Tackling Johne's will therefore contribute to encouraging permanent behavioural change on farm in the management of endemic diseases through better biosecurity and improved hygiene and disease control practices.

- ***International Competitiveness***

The UK dairy industry needs to proactively tackle the disease if it is to remain internationally competitive and to be able demonstrate to customers in export markets that it is taking a responsible industry approach.

Significant efforts are being made around the world in most major milk producing countries to tackle Johne's. At the recent Para TB Forum in Nantes in France reports were received on activity in eleven major milk producing countries. The experience of these countries shows that managing and reducing Johne's disease is both necessary and achievable.

- ***Antimicrobial Resistance***

The industry must contribute to efforts to reduce antimicrobial resistance. Because of its association with other disease conditions (lameness and mastitis), Johne's is a

contributor of antibiotic use on farms. Reducing Johne's will assist in efforts to reduce antibiotic use on farms and address AMR.

- **Sustainability**

Farmers will need to maintain production efficiency and technical performance to remain viable in a competitive environment. Those that have already established effective Johne's management plans and demonstrated their success now consider Johne's management as a normal and necessary part of sustainable farming practice.

3. The National Johne's Management Plan: Phase I

Based on membership of the plan and information on activity at farm level considerable success has been achieved in realising the objective of industry education and engagement.

The target of Phase I was:

- To manage and then reduce the incidence of Johne's disease in dairy cattle and engage 80% of dairy farmers in Great Britain in credible and robust Johne's management activities

Phase I required:

- Farmers to determine their risk and status
- Put in place in consultation with their vet one of the six strategies developed by the Action Group on Johne's in consultation with their vet

The members of the plan are organisations that agreed to commit dairy farmers to delivering the requirements of the plan. Currently the membership consists of milk purchasers accounting for nearly 78% of UK milk production. The membership is listed at the end of this document.

Actual engagement by farmers with the requirement of the plan is difficult to assess but based on available information NML can confirm that it has undertaken some level of Johne's testing for 3,500 dairy farms over the last 12 months, ranging from ad hoc 30 cow screens through to full whole herd quarterly screening. It is estimated that a further 1,500 to 2,000 farms will have tested for Johne's through other laboratories, which would indicate that approximately 50% of GB dairy herds are engaged in some form of surveillance.

The Action Group on Johne's has agreed that members of the scheme will be required to provide data on farmer engagement assessed over the period October to December using a standardised questionnaire. This will provide a baseline to assess further progress.

Additionally Phase I required:

- ***Employment of a Delivery Team (service provider)***

A consortium of RAFT Solutions, SAC Consulting (a division of SRUC) and XLVets was appointed to deliver this role. Half of the cost of the Delivery Team is funded by the scheme members. This is matched by a contribution from AHDB Dairy. The Delivery Team has been primarily focused on recruiting members and in the creation and dissemination of information to the industry.

- ***Training for the veterinary profession***

This has been provided by the BCVA through the development of a web based training package. To date 230 vets have registered and 113 have completed the training programme. These numbers are expected to increase further.

- ***The development of a technical manual***

This will be completed by October 2016.

4. NJMP and Phase II

Under the NJMP the requirements for Phase II are (paragraphs 37 – 39):

- To move towards:
 - a more centralised approach to aggregate monitoring of the prevalence of the disease
 - uniform industry standards for sharing information and undertaking action
- Dairy farmers would review their risk assessments, herd Johnes status and control plans at an appropriate interval using a protocol to be developed by the AGJ. Aggregate information would continue to be passed to the service provider to permit monitoring of progress in improving control of the disease.
- The service provider would seek to raise membership of the plan to achieve 95% of the dairy supply in Great Britain.

Within these broad parameters the Action Group is seeking industry views on the overall objectives for Phase II and the framework for implementation.

5. Overall Objective

The overall objective of Phase I was the management and reduction of Johnes.

The Action Group is of the view that this would remain an appropriate level of aspiration at this stage in the industry's efforts to tackle the disease and that raising the level of

aspiration to minimisation or elimination would be premature at this time. Consequently setting targets for the reduction of the disease would not be necessary.

It is therefore proposed that the objective for the scheme should remain the management and reduction of Johne's without the setting of reduction targets. However, consistent with the overall objective of management and reduction supplementary objectives would be:

- identifying and protecting those herds with zero or low prevalence
- preventing the spread of Johne's between herds
- reducing the prevalence of Johne's in infected herds

Consultation question number 1: Do you agree with these objectives?

6. Implementation Framework

In developing proposals for Phase II, the Action Group is of the view that the implementation framework would have to:

- ***Ensure vets were properly trained***

A uniformly high level of knowledge would be required from the veterinary profession to give farmers confidence that they would receive consistent and robust advice.

- ***Maintain engagement between vets and farmers***

Creating and maintaining a dialogue between farmers and vets is essential to ensuring that farmers receive the advice they need.

- ***Include external verification***

Farmer performance in implementing control strategies would have to be independently verified by vets.

- ***Encourage risk assessment***

All participant farms would undertake a risk assessment with their vet.

- ***Provide commercial incentives for all parties***

The incentive for parties to engage would be provided by:

- Purchaser commitment to requiring the involvement of their supplying farmers
- Leaving the provision of veterinary advice to farmers on a commercial basis
- Requiring vets to be trained before being able to verify farmer compliance
- Demonstrating to farmers of the commercial benefits of tackling the disease

The Action Group is therefore proposing that for Phase II:

- Members of the NJMP would require their associated farmers to obtain annually over three years beginning 1st January 2017 a signed declaration by a BCVA Johne's Certified Veterinary Adviser that they would be implementing one of the six strategies specified by the National Johne's Management Plan.
- Only vets that had undergone the BCVA training programme would be permitted to sign the declaration.
- In year 1 the declaration would confirm that the farmer had:
 - undertaken to assess their risks and herd status and,
 - put in place the necessary management information, equipment, husbandry and resources to implement the agreed control strategy.
- In years 2 and 3 the declaration would confirm that the farmer at the time of the inspection:
 - had reassessed their risk and status and,
 - was correctly utilising the management information, equipment, husbandry and resources to implement the strategy effectively.
- The BCVA Certified Johne's Advisor would issue a declaration that in their opinion, the farm's Johne's management plan was appropriate, robust, and compliant with the objectives of the NJMP.
- For all three years if deficiencies were identified by the vet then these would have to be rectified by the farmer before the declaration could be signed. Alternatively, the chosen strategy could be changed to enable compliance with the resources available.
- The farmer would make a copy of the signed declaration available to their milk purchaser.

The precise wording of the veterinary declaration would be developed in conjunction with the BCVA and other relevant veterinary industry bodies and would take into account the different requirements of the six control strategies. Guidance for vets would be developed by the Action Group. The risk assessment should be in an approved format to accurately identify target areas for intervention to reduce Johne's prevalence.

A Delivery Team would continue to be employed to:

- Provide information to the industry on:
 - The benefits of tackling the disease
 - The six strategies developed by the NJMP and how they can be implemented
- Maintain and update the Action Johne's website.

- Maximise the engagement between vets and farmers by provision of common messages to all parties.

The performance of the Delivery Team would be assessed against the delivery of these outcomes.

At this stage the Action Group is of the view that it would be premature to seek to monitor disease status. The emphasis will be on the correct selection of control strategy and robust application of the tasks required to reduce the level of MAP transfer between and within herds.

As a result the Action Group is of the view that it would be premature to create a centralised database on the status of individual farms or the strategy they have chosen to implement. If farmers wished to generate information on the disease status of individual animals then they would be recommended to use existing industry initiatives such as CHeCS.

Consultation questions:

Number 2: Do you agree that this is the appropriate implementation framework?

Number 3: What else do you think should be done to move the initiative forward?

7. Responding to the consultation

The Action Group would appreciate your input.

To respond to this consultation please submit your views to the secretary of the Action Group at pdawson@dairyuk.org by 23rd September 2016.

List of NJMP members

AJ & RG Barber Ltd (Maryland Farm)
Arla Foods
Belton Cheese
BV Dairy
Cropwell Bishop
Dairy Crest
Embleton Hall
First Milk
Glanbia
Graham's the Family Dairy Ltd
Isle of Man Creamery
Lactalis
Lanchester
Longley Farms
Meadow Foods
Medina Dairy Limited (Watson Dairies & Buckley Farm Dairy)
Muller Milk and Ingredients
OMSCo
Parkham Farms
Pollock & Sons
Quickes Traditional Ltd
Wensleydale Dairy Products
Wyke Cheese
Yew Tree Dairy