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Over 75% of UK milk committed to National Johne's Management Plan

16th November 2015 – Since launching in April 2015, the Action Johne's Delivery Team is delighted to announce that milk purchasers covering over 75% of UK milk produced by volume, are now committed to delivering the National Johne's Management Plan – so close to achieving its phase one target nearly one year ahead of schedule.

The Action Johne's team have also developed a new website, leaflets, buying guides and webinars to help farmers, vets and milk purchasers understand what they need to do to take control of Johne's on farm and is working with the British Cattle Veterinary Association to provide further training.

Lyndon Edwards, Chairman of the Action Johne's Steering Group said: "It is fantastic to see the wealth of support from the milk purchasing industry for the National Johne's Management Plan, working together to tackle this disease. Over the next twelve months, the Action Johne's Delivery Team will be working closely with purchasers, vets and farmers to ensure that everyone has the right skills and knowledge to set up farm-specific control programmes, so together we can make an impact on Johne's disease in the UK."

Derek Armstrong, Endemic Disease Lead for AHDB Dairy said: "Helping farmers improve their Johne's disease controls on farm will have a positive effect on many other aspects of production, and so even in these challenging economic times, will be a worthwhile step to take. We know animals with Johne's disease are likely to be culled earlier, and are likely to be affected by other conditions, including chronic mastitis, lameness and high somatic cell counts."

In this first phase of the programme, farmers will be asked to assess the risks of entry, presence and spread of MAP infection (which leads to Johne's disease) in their herd and determine their Johne's disease risk and status by March 2016. By October 2016, in consultation with their vet, participating

farmers will need to have implemented one of the six control strategies developed by the Action Group on Johne's.

The Action Johne's Delivery Team is a consortium of SAC Consulting, a division of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), RAFT Solutions Ltd. and XLVets and is jointly funded by DairyCo and milk purchasers.

Notes to editor's

Additional quotes from the start of the scheme:

1. Johne's disease is a chronic, debilitating and irreversible disease of ruminants caused by infection with *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP)
2. Animals are usually infected as calves with at least 80% of infections occurring within the first month of life. Infection is mainly caused by ingesting faeces often through contaminated bedding, udders, teats or buckets or from colostrum or milk. Much less commonly the disease can be acquired in the womb or later in life.
3. Youngstock in particular can be infected but may not yet be infectious, and so may be difficult to detect with currently available tests.
4. Many animals will carry the infection harmlessly throughout their lives without being a danger to themselves or to others, but some become infectious, and some become clinically diseased. We can use the tests currently available to detect infectious animals and manage them effectively.
5. Johne's disease is almost always introduced to a herd by purchasing infected replacement breeding stock (calves, heifers, cows or bulls).
6. Johne's disease can adversely affect the physical and economic performance of a dairy herd. A recent study of 385 UK Dairy Herds by James Hanks of the University of Reading (2013) showed that Johne's disease test positive cows were 2x more likely to have a cell count > 200,000 cells/ml and were 2x more likely to have milk yields 25% below their adjusted herd average. Johne's disease costs can rise to 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.
7. With Johne's disease, the cost of the disease is not just from clinical disease of infected animals. In most herds, the major costs come from increased susceptibility to other conditions and increased forced culling and the retention of cows that should otherwise be culled.
8. International experience has shown that if a rigorous control program is implemented and applied robustly Johne's disease can be brought under control. In Denmark the Johne's disease test prevalence for herds adopting the national control program has reduced from 10% to 2% over 6 years.

Action Group on Johne's

The Action Johne's Initiative has been developed by the Action Group on Johne's, which is an open forum for industry stakeholders interested in tackling Johne's. The Action Group on Johne's is chaired by Lyndon Edwards, a dairy farmer from Gloucester, who is also a Director of OMSCo and Chairman of Dairy UK's Farmers' Forum. The secretariat support to the Action Group on Johne's is provided by Dairy UK. More information at www.actionjohnesuk.org.

National Johne's Management Plan

The Action Johne's Initiative constitutes the active implementation of the requirements of the National Johne's Management Plan, which was developed by the Action Group on Johne's, unveiled in November 2014 for industry consultation which closed in February 2015.

Delivery of Action Johne's

Funding for the Action Johne's Initiative will be provided by DairyCo and matched in total by an equal contribution from individual milk purchasers, both co-op and private. The Action Johne's Delivery Team consists of a consortium of SAC Consulting and RAFT Solutions Ltd and XLVets. The team were appointed through their experience in delivering the Paraban project, recent Defra RDPE Johne's training, in put to the UK Cattle Expert Group and the expertise of George Gunn, George Caldow, Colin Mason, David Black, Jonathan Statham and Alastair Hayton, all of whom will be involved in the project.

Media contacts

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