



## **ACTION GROUP ON JOHNE'S ANNOUNCES AMBITIOUS PHASE II FOR NATIONAL JOHNE'S MANAGEMENT PLAN**

*Worcester, 7<sup>th</sup> February* – The Action Group on Johne's launched Phase II of the National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP) at a successful conference in Worcestershire, to build on the foundations created by Phase I of the plan.

### **About the Action Group on Johne's**

The Action Johne's Initiative is the implementation of the National Johne's Management Plan. The plan is overseen by the Action Group on Johne's which is the industry committee, supported by Dairy UK, which takes the lead on pushing forward Johne's management in the UK. The Group consists of organisations from the industry supply chain that are committed to tackling Johne's disease.

### **Case studies**

John Peck, Redlands Farm, Hook Norton, Oxfordshire and vet Chris Gasson, Hook Norton Veterinary Group presented the first case study of the morning focusing on biosecurity monitoring and protection. Redlands Farm, a 450 cow unit, maintains biosecurity specifically to control Johne's disease by increasing animal numbers through home bred heifers only. The herd has been closed for more than 15 years with the only incoming stock being bulls from level 1 accredited herds. The farm tests annually with a whole herd blood test to achieve SAC accreditation. Delegates at the conference heard how, using a biosecurity strategy based on a closed herd, a plan was formulated on the tentative assumption that Johne's was not present on farm. The strategy was chosen as it was low cost in terms of monitoring and added very little extra work for staff. After an increased emphasis from milk buyers, the farm became more active with monitoring, carrying out several '30 cow screens' on milk samples and progressing to the accreditation route with the SAC. They carried out the first whole herd blood test in January which showed 3 out of 464 cow results needed to be retested. "The benefit is the pride we have in not having the disease on farm" says Chris Gasson. "This approach needs to be dedicated, with extra care taken when purchasing bulls; an alternative option could be to purchase embryos instead. There is also a degree of patience needed to do this. Sometimes the decision to buy an extra 20 cows to put milk in the tank could cost much more than the value of the milk they bring, if the biosecurity and purchasing decisions are not right."



Delegates also heard from farmer Kate Lywood who manages the family farming business at Marshalls Farm, Kirdford, West Sussex and has been working with vet Ben Brearley, The Livestock Partnership to control Johne's through Improved Farm Management and Strategic Testing.



Marshalls Farm is a 650 acre dairy and arable farm with plans to milk 450 spring calvers with young stock. It has been a closed herd for over 30 years with a strong belief that prevention is better than cure, remaining free of production diseases such as BVD and Leptospirosis. Their Johne's plan on farm includes the identification and culling of all high-risk animals and any closely related offspring. They then put

management measures into play to help prevent the exposure of young calves to animals which are potentially shedding Johne's disease but cannot or have not yet been identified by the current testing regime. The Marshall family have carried out this approach since the identification of Johne's disease three years ago but it is still too early to tell if animals have been infected since the control measures were adopted. Vet Ben Brearley said; "We would recommend the early adoption of any Johne's disease control measures as it is such a long term project. It is important to find out as soon as possible what your risks are, what your likely prevalence may be and to start a control plan early."

David Hiscock, Westhayes Farm, Sherborne, Dorset and Rachel Hayton, Synergy Farm Health,



Evershot, Dorset explained to delegates how they introduced a Johne's management strategy for Improved Farm Management Test and Cull in 2011 when Johne's disease was considered one of the major threats to the farm, due to the levels of clinical disease seen. West Hayes Farm is a 300 dairy herd in an extensive grazing system, utilising Friesian and crossbred genetics. The strategy is overseen by David, who organises the testing regime, culling decisions and calving and youngstock management as well as making sure the farm staff carry out the

necessary practices when he isn't there. Farmer and vet explained how the dairy herd is split into two cohorts, the dairy herd producing replacements and the dairy herd producing beef animals which calf at distinct times of year. Any animals in the dairy producing replacements cohort identified as amber or red on the milk test are excluded from the calving box and calved in an isolation unit. All calves from this unit are snatched prior to colostrum transfer, or are tagged as Johne's suspect animals and not retained as replacements. Any replacement heifers born to a suspect mother are snatched and fed either colostrum from low risk cows or artificial colostrum. Vet Rachel Hayton, explains, "We chose this strategy because it was felt that improved farm management alone would not lead to a sufficiently rapid reduction in disease prevalence and there was a need to remove animals before they became heavy shedders. Culling all test positive cows in the early days would have led to an unacceptably high culling rate and so a compromise was reached whereby test positive cows are culled as soon as they develop any other problem. This strategy has resulted in cows not demonstrating overt clinical disease for some time. Disease prevalence based on serology results has been dropping steadily in the last few years and we now see very low prevalence, and even eradication, as an achievable option."

Jonathan Statham from Bishopton Veterinary Group and John Banks from Wildon Grange outlined



how a team approach to excellent calving and calf management protocols was having a positive impact on Johne's disease control under Strategy 2: Improved Farm Management. The conference were impressed by the attention to detail Wildon Grange practice.

Delegates also heard from Karen Bond, Chair of the Johne's Technical Group on the training for vets developed by the BCVA and on the Technical Manual for the scheme and from Anthony Barber of Barber's Farmhouse Cheesemakers giving a processor's perspective on the implementation of the National Johne's Management Plan.



The afternoon programme started with an interactive session led by Pete Orpin of the Park Veterinary Group on the best way of obtaining farmer engagement followed by an overview of practice in other countries by Dick Sibley of West Ridge Veterinary Practice.



Lyndon Edwards, also spoke about the requirements of phase II of the Action Johne's Initiative and the conference closed with a presentation by Sophie Throup of RAFT Solutions, on the support provided by the Action Johne's Delivery Team and the services available from industry suppliers.

