



JOHNE'S

INTRODUCTION

Johne's is an infectious wasting condition of cattle. It is caused by a bacterium (*Mycobacterium avian* subspecies *paratuberculosis*, abbreviated to MAP). It is most commonly seen in cattle aged between two and six years old, however they will have been infected in the first few months of their lives.

SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR HERD

Many farms may have undiagnosed Johne's in their herds.

Symptoms to look out for that may indicate the presence of Johne's in your herd include:

- Weight Loss/Wasting
- Profuse Scour
- Cow usually still bright and eating well
- Bottle jaw eventually develops
- Reduced milk yield
- Reduced fertility
- High cull rates



DIAGNOSIS

Where there have been high cull rates of older, thin, scouring cows with no other known infectious cause, we may make the decision to do a complete herd screen for Johne's. We usually recommend testing cows four times a year for Johne's antibody in the milk. Any cows that come back as positive twice should be identified with a coloured ear tag or collar so that everyone on the farm knows who they are. Positive cows that in the future show weight loss or scour should be culled.



HOW IT IS SPREAD

- Cow to calf via colostrum
- Calves ingesting dung from unclean, contaminated teats or feed
- Contaminated water sources
- An un-hygenic calving environment

The bacteria is extremely tough and can survive in slurry and on pasture for 12 months.

KEY POINTS

- Scour and weight loss
- Usually 2 to 6 years old
- Negative test result doesn't guarantee no Johne's disease
- Closed herd is best
- Purchased stock = major source of infection
- If Johne's is present on your farm then DO NOT POOL COLOSTRUM
- Hygiene is the most important way of controlling the disease, especially at calving.
- Positive cows should be easily identifiable e.g. red ear tag / collar

MANAGING COWS WITH INFECTION (MILK TEST ANTIBODY POSITIVE COWS)

Many of these may not be showing clinical signs yet, but they will be dropping in milk yield and will quite probably be shedding MAP bacteria. Cows testing positive for Johne's antibody should be calved separately to other cows and their colostrum must not be fed to their calves. Heifer calves can be snatch reared from their mothers but there is a small risk that the calf may still have been infected in the uterus.

Positive cows should have a red ear tag or some other marker so that they are readily identified as Johne's positive and kept separate from other cows at calving and during the dry period.

They should be bulled with a beef bull because heifer calves shouldn't be kept for breeding from infected cows.

This policy is designed to manage the disease without prematurely culling the infected animals. As it takes years for Johne's disease to show up it is important to have high hygiene levels in the calving pens to prevent infection between calves.

Colostrum should not be pooled and calves should only receive their mother's colostrum. Calves from 'positive' cows should get colostrum from a young non infected cow.

The reduction of Johne's cases will have a positive benefit to yields and general cow health.

For further information,
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