

Deadlines mean that it's time to implement and act on disease control plans

# It's time for Johne's action

With 26 milk buyers already signed up to the National Johne's Management Plan, the time has come to set new deadlines and rules for compliance. We explain what this means for producers.

text **Natalie Wragg**

**T**he second phase of the National Johne's Management Plan was launched earlier this year and Action Johne's has now set out the deadlines for compliance with this industry-led scheme. While phase I of the National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP) was focussed on education and raising awareness of Johne's disease, this second phase calls for action in tackling the disease, through robust

management on farm. "It is increasingly rare to come across producers who don't know something about Johne's disease, whether that is through their vet, attending a meeting, or reading something in the farming press," says NMR vet advisor Karen Bond. "This is in stark contrast to a decade ago when it was often regarded as a subject to be avoided, and certainly not something to be talked about in public."

The success of the first phase of the NJMP has raised the level of understanding across the industry and has put producers and vets in a strong position to move forward and reduce the prevalence of Johne's in the UK dairy herd.

## Veterinary advice

With more than 620 vets accredited by the BCVA as trained in Johne's veterinary advice, and more than 82% of the UK milk supply pool already within the Action Johne's initiative, the time is right to set the deadlines for compliance, according to the chair of the Action Johne's group, Lyndon Edwards.

"Red Tractor standards were also revised recently and they now include having a Johne's management plan, so we look

*Take action: phase II of the NJMP requires robust management plans to be drawn up and followed*







Karen Bond: "Declaration can only be signed by a vet who has completed training"

forward to helping the industry work together to manage this issue on farm." With 26 milk purchasers involved with the initiative, Action Johne's felt that it was important to set out a formal structure for compliance so every producer knows what is expected of them, regardless of their milk buyer. So a new producer and vet declaration has been created, setting out exactly what needs to happen for a herd to be compliant with the NJMP. And this must be completed by October 2018 (some milk purchasers may seek to complete before this date).

In order for the herd vet to sign the declaration, three steps need to be taken:

- 1. An on-farm Johne's risk assessment.**  
This will be carried out by the herd's vet, ideally using a formal risk assessment tool. Risks of disease entry and spread will be identified.
- 2. An assessment of herd Johne's status.**  
This requires a screening test. The

*Declaration form: vets and producers must jointly draft and sign*



Lyndon Edwards: "Awareness of the NJMP is rapidly growing"

minimum testing requirement to determine status for the NJMP is either a targeted 30-cow screen or a cull-cow screen. Bulk-tank testing for Johne's disease is not an acceptable screening test for the NJMP due to its poor sensitivity. Discuss the best option for your herd with your vet.

- 3. A written Johne's management plan.**  
This will be based on the findings from the first two steps and must be agreed between the producer and vet. One of the six NJMP strategies will be selected and then a bespoke management plan created for the herd, which fulfils the objectives of the NJMP and sets out the management tasks required.

### Latest research

The declaration can only be signed by a vet who has completed the training and passed the assessment to become a BCVA-accredited Johne's advisor. This training is designed to ensure that vets fully understand the principles of the NJMP and how to select the correct strategy for each herd, and that they are fully up to date with the latest research. "The pass mark for the accreditation test is 100%, so you can be sure that if your vet has done this training they definitely know their stuff," says Mrs Bond.

Producers then need to sign the declaration to confirm that they have agreed the written plan and that they will adopt it on their unit. This process will be repeated annually to update the risk assessment, ensure the management plan is still appropriate, and to make any necessary alterations.

"It's important to ensure that your herd adopts the most appropriate strategy and that your plan is robust. This will require significant input from your vet," says Mrs Bond. "This isn't something that can be done during a PD session, nor can the form just be signed off while

## Action Johne's six strategies

1. Biosecurity protect and monitor
2. Improved farm management
3. Improved farm management and strategic testing
4. Improved farm management, test and cull
5. Breed to terminal sire
6. Firebreak vaccination

➔ For further details on the control strategies, visit [www.actionjohnesuk.org](http://www.actionjohnesuk.org)

you pick up a bottle of penicillin from the practice. To ensure that the Johne's management plan will work, the herd vet must carry out a thorough risk assessment and put together the plan. This process is likely to take a couple of hours and will need to be paid for by the producer. It may seem like a lot of money, but having the wrong plan will cost you much more."

### Control plan

Many producers will already be well on the way to successfully managing Johne's and for them working with their vet to put in place a robust control plan will just be 'business as usual'. The only difference will be an extra form to sign. "For those who have not already engaged then now is the time," adds Mrs Bond. "There are more than 620 accredited vets, across the country, ready and waiting to help their clients tackle Johne's. The knowledge and tools are available to effectively manage Johne's on each and every dairy farm, regardless of management system, herd size or disease status. So talk to your vet and get started today."

"We have seen huge steps forward in the awareness of the National Johne's Management Plan so far and we look forward to the continuing engagement and support of the industry," adds Mr Edwards. "The NJMP plan will help to reduce the prevalence of Johne's on farm and provide future sustainability for producers and the whole supply chain, as well as providing opportunities for future trade in an increasingly competitive market." |

➔ Check to see if your vet is fully trained at [www.actionjohnesuk.org](http://www.actionjohnesuk.org)