FriarsMoor Livestock Health

Newsletter June 2025

By Yoav Alony-Gilboa DVM CertSHP MRCVS

National Johnes Management Plan, Phase III

Understanding Johne's Disease

Johne's disease is caused by Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis (MAP). This slow progressing, incurable disease affects the intestinal tract of cattle, leading to watery diarrhoea, weight loss, and eventual culling of affected animals. Infected animals can shed billions of bacteria into the environment long before showing clinical signs, making control particularly challenging.

The economic impact on dairy farms is substantial. Infected herds typically experience 10-20% reductions in milk yield from affected cows, increased levels of lameness and mastitis, reduced fertility and overall increased culling rates.

Young calves, in their first month of life, are most susceptible to infection but older animals up to 12 month can also be infected. Calves born to infected dams should also be considered "high risk". Contracting the disease as an adult cow is rare but possible, depending on the level of infection on individual farms.

On-Farm Management and Control Strategies

The primary route of infection is via contaminated faeces from infected, shedding cows, and to a lesser degree colostrum and milk. This makes calf management the cornerstone of control. Farms should attempt to reduce the risk of contamination to calves by improving hygiene in calving areas and ensuring no faecal contamination from infected cows in calf rearing pens or fields grazed by animals under 12 months of age.

Infected cows should be identified by regular, predominantly milk antibody testing, either quarterly or at critical management points in the herd calendar.

Managing positive animals requires careful consideration of various factors including test results over time, production performance, and breeding value. High-value animals may warrant repeat testing before making culling decisions, while persistently positive animals, particularly high shedders, should be prioritized for removal, while still holding some value.

When immediate culling isn't feasible, management strategies should include segregating positive animals, avoiding their use for breeding, and ensuring they don't contaminate calf-rearing areas.

Control of Johnes has been a "Red Tractor" requirement for a number of years, and all milk buyers require farms to have a control plan in place. Most farms are now working closely with our vets and taking part in the NJMP now entering phase III.

NJMP Phase III update:

Johne's disease continues to challenge UK dairy farmers, but the tools and knowledge for effective control are now well-established. The National Johne's Management Plan provides a structured framework for disease control, while Phase III introduces enhanced requirements designed to accelerate progress.

All herds must obtain an Average Test Value (ATV). The ATV provides a standardized measure of herd infection status, calculated as the average of all milk ELISA test results conducted within a year. This metric allows for consistent benchmarking between herds and tracking progress over time.

The minimum requirement to generate an ATV will be a 60-cow random screen. The 30-cow targeted screen is no longer an acceptable option.

The third phase will also see the creation of a national Johne's Control Index target ATV of 5.5, with a goal to achieve this by 2030. This ambitious target reflects the industry's commitment to substantial disease reduction.

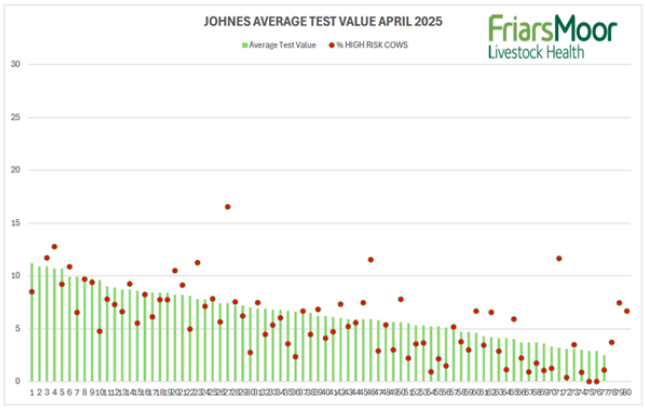
The objective for Phase III is unchanged and keeps the basic structure of the NJMP, which requires regular vet/farmer dialogue focusing on risk management and implementation of an appropriate control strategy. This will continue to be backed up by annual veterinary certification. All our Friars Moor vets are qualified NJMP advisors and are engaged with all our farmers to:

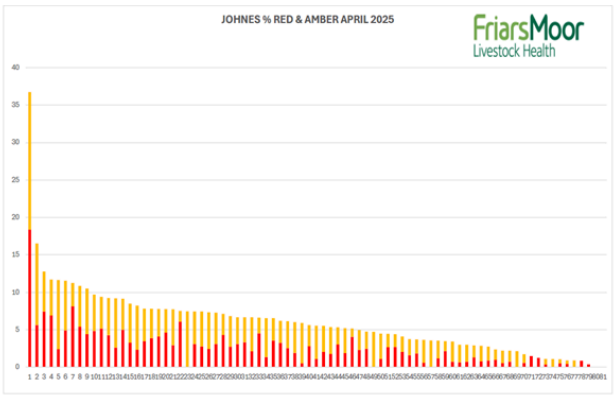
- Plan testing schedules and format for best disease control results
- Understand their herd's ATV and benchmark against industry targets
- Review and potentially intensify control strategies based on improved data
- Consider the long-term benefits of enhanced disease control against short-term increased costs for those who relied on a minimum 30 cow test up until now.

The prevalence of Johne's Disease has been successfully reduced across our farms through the previous phases, demonstrating that coordinated action can achieve meaningful results.

However, challenges remain. The disease's long incubation period means that benefits from improved management may take several years to become apparent. Additionally, the voluntary nature of the scheme means success depends on continued farmer engagement and commitment.

If you have any questions about Johnes control in your herd, and the implementation of phase III, please speak to your vet at your next routine visit or call the office on 01258 472314





DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

13 JUNE

HEIFFER EFFICIENCY

11am - 2pm @ Alfords Field Farm, Lovington BA7 7PZ

Focus: Use of growth rate data at grass, nutrition, and parasite management.

17 JUNE

OPTIMISING GROWTH OF BEEF CATTLE AT GRASS

3.30pm - 7pm

Join us for a farm walk at Cranborne Grazing, by kind permission of Tom and Karolina Mitchell. The meeting will be facilitated by Luppo Diepenbroek.

Open to all farmers with beef suckler or beef x dairy animals at grass.

9 JULY

ALL YEAR ROUND CALVERS BENCHMARK MEETING

12noon - 1.30pm @ FMLH West Stour SP8 5SF

An opportunity to discuss your youngstock data from the last 12 months, what went well and what things you might look to tweak.

17 JULY

PRACTICAL CALVING COURSE

10am - 2.30pm @ FMLH West Stour SP8 5SF

22 JULY

LEVEL 2 CALF REARING COURSE

10am - 3.30pm @ Longmoor Farm SP8 5QW

22 AUG

LEVEL 1 CALF REARING COURSE

10am - 3.30pm @ Hanford Farm DT11 8HN

XL VETS CHARITY CHALLENGE

As part of their 20 year celebrations, FMLH are joining forces with the XLVets community, taking part in the XLVets 20th Anniversary Charity Challenge.

BREAST CANCER NOW The research & support charity

The goal is simple: raise as much money for charity as possible in 20 days.

We are holding a 20 question quiz with a goody hamper as the prize. We are asking for a minimum entry donation of £2 per person (you can donate more if you wish). Quiz papers can be collected from any of our branches with all donations being equally divided between Breast Cancer Now, and The Ripple Effect.

20 XL Vets Celebrating 20 Years

The entry fee can be paid in cash at any of our branches, or you can donate by using the QR code.

Closing date Friday 20th June & the winner will be announced on Monday 23rd June.

Keep your eyes out on our social media and our website for other fund raising events.

STAFF NEWS

Emma, our Farm Operations Manager, celebrated her 25th anniversary at Friars Moor!!

We welcome Liz Peach who has joined our admin team.

We also welcome Bonnie Craddock into the ATT team.

TB TESTER AUDIT

A TB tester audit is a process where the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) monitors and evaluates the TB skin testing conducted by Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs). These audits, which can be on-farm and unannounced, ensure testing is carried out correctly and in accordance with standard operating procedures (SOPs). The monitoring involves assessing test results, including the number of reactors, inconclusive reactions, and recorded reactions, and comparing them with other ATTs' results.

We are pleased to announce that both Celeste Spink and Kate Humphries recently passed their unannounced audit.

TO REGISTER YOUR INTEREST FOR ANY OF OUR UPCOMING MEETINGS PLEASE CALL THE FARM OFFICE ON 01258 472314