

September 2025 NEWSLETTER

Welcome

Johne's Disease

Johne's disease is a chronic gut disease of adult cattle and sheep. It is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP). The main clinical symptoms in cattle are progressive weight loss and chronic diarrhoea. Sub-clinical disease can cause reduced growth rates, poorer milk yields, increased lameness and mastitis incidence. In sheep, symptoms include chronic weight loss, poor body condition and reduced fleece quality.

National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP)

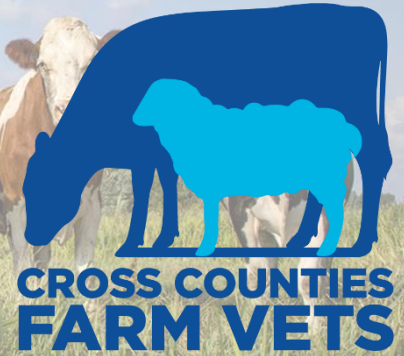
The National Johne's Management Plan was set up by The Action Group on Johne's in 2015, the initiative aims to reduce the level of Johne's disease on dairy farms in England, Wales and Scotland. Any dairy farmer assured by Red Tractor must participate with the NJMP and complete an annual review and declaration. The declaration must be signed by one of our Johne's accredited vets. Currently there is no compulsory requirement for beef or sheep clients to engage but we would strongly encourage engagement and actions to control Johne's disease in your herd/flock.

The NJMP's has now entered the third phase and remains as important now as it did at the start, continued engagement with robust biosecurity, management and prevention measures to minimise disease and ongoing testing are critical.

Key changes to the NJMP in Phase 3:

- ALL herds must obtain an average test value (ATV)
 - **The numerical average of the herd's Johne's antibody test results** at any given time. Due to the fluctuation of Johne's antibodies produced by an infected animal, more regular testing allows for a more accurate ATV
 - Helps assess the level of disease present and allow progress to be tracked over time.
 - Herds under 5.5 are considered to have the disease under good control.
- The minimum requirement to generate an ATV is now a **60-cow random screen**.
 - The 30-cow targeted screen is no longer an acceptable option.
 - As always, a **whole herd screen** where all animals in milk are tested annually (or more frequently) to produce an ATV is preferable.
- The creation of a national Johne's Control Index target of ATV 5.5 by 2030.
- The creation of a national Johne's Tracker database based on ATV and other key statistics.

NJMP and health plans are unique to your farm and situation, please call the office if you would like to discuss Johne's control further or book a visit to create a management plan.



TB test bookings

As we head into autumn, we also start to get very busy TB testing. Please ensure to book your tests in promptly to get the dates you need, when your letter arrives, to avoid disappointment.

Team update!

Goodbye Gina!

Gina will be off on maternity leave from the middle of September. Although she will be very missed, we are sure she will still pop in for the occasional flock club meeting to see everyone!

Welcome back Jessica!

Jessica will be back with us from 8th September. We are sure you will all be glad to see her back on your farms!

Smallholder Club Meeting

Tuesday 23rd September at 7pm, at The Hollybush, Ashby Parva. Hosted by Celia Smith from Kela, discussing lameness across all species. Open to all smallholder clients, a hot dinner will be provided. Please book your place with the office.

Save the date! Christmas Quiz: Friday 5th December 2025.

Supporting The Farming Community Network (FCN) and Macmillan Cancer Research. If you are able to donate any auction or raffle prices, for such a great cause, please contact the office.

What do you call a cow who plays guitar?



Top tips for safe handling of cattle

Effective handling of cattle improves animal welfare by reducing stress and reduces labour requirements while increasing the safety of those working with the cattle. No system is perfect, but it is worth spending some time watching your cattle go through your system and making a note of where they are stopping and why. This can help you make some small changes which can then improve the flow of cattle through it.

General set up:

- The handling system should be set up on level surface or if not, slightly up hill.
- Avoid cramped systems with tight corners or right-angled turns.
- Have the exit of the crush back into the pens or fields as cattle instinctively want to go back where they came from.
- Good even lighting (either natural or artificial) over the whole system. Cattle dislike moving into dark or bright areas.
- If setting up in the field, place vehicles against the pen fencing to reduce the chance of cattle moving it.

Holding areas:

- Cattle need space in the holding pens as overcrowding leads to milling and circling behaviour. AHDB advise 0.9-1.4 m² per head for youngstock, 1.7 m² per head for adult cattle and 1.85 m² per cow with calf at foot
- Rails should be a minimum of 1.5m high but it is good practice to have the top rail higher than the tallest animal to go through the system.
- Longer, narrower pens can be easier to operate by one person on foot.
- These holding pens can be kept more open as solid sides can make some cattle more anxious.

Crowd Pen:

- Ensure that the cattle can see down into the race and that remains the best option for them.
- Don't pack the animals in too tightly as they need room to turn and follow each other up the race.
- Circular crowd pens prevent cattle hanging in the corners but if you don't have one then boards can be put across any corners
- From the crowd pen into the race needs to be straight on one side and the other at a slight angle (ideally 30°)

Race:

- Allow 1.5-2m per adult animal in the race
- If you put a curve or bend into the race, then put the handler on the inside of the curve
- Cover the sides so the cattle aren't distracted as they travel through it.

Crush:

- A well-oiled yoke that opens and closes easily and latches in place properly.
- A solid floor that is stable and non-slip, so the cattle feel secure when stepping into it and are more likely to stand still while being tested.
- A front gate that latches properly reduces the chances of any escapees.
- A gate at the back of the crush to prevent the cattle backing out. Sliding or roll-over gates work well as they can be operated outside the race/crush so are safer to use.
- Ensure the crush is on a flat solid surface and well secured so it doesn't move if cattle hit it.



If you would like further information or have any questions, please give us a call on 01455 710953. We also have a contact for a mobile handling system which can be hired.

A moo-sician!

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