



TCP2 - A new approach to herd testing for Johne's disease in Victorian dairy cattle herds

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Background

In 1996, Victoria introduced a voluntary Test and Control Program (TCP) for herds infected with bovine Johne's disease (BJD). The program aimed to contain the spread of the disease within and between herds and involved annual whole-herd blood testing of the adult cattle, culling of test-positive cattle (with compensation) and rearing the calves away from the manure of adult cattle. The program was delivered by private veterinary practitioners and administered by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

While the program has delivered significant benefits to many affected producers by reducing clinical disease in their herds and improving market access for the herds that completed the program, several difficulties were identified. Most notably, that access to the program was limited (by cost) to 600 herds, and that the initial goal of three consecutive, negative whole-herd blood tests was too difficult for most herds to achieve in a reasonable timeframe.

In response to these and other issues, a new testing program (TCP2) has been developed that aims to include more infected herds and allow pathways for enhanced trading of dairy cattle and land.

The new program also incorporates a rigorous, externally audited, calf rearing accreditation program (JDCAP) that aims to minimise the risk of BJD transmission to calves.

So what's new in TCP2?

From 1 July 2003,

- all BJD Infected herds can apply to participate
- it will be mandatory for dairy herds to be participating in JDCAP prior to the commencement of testing
- there will be subsidised testing for dairy cattle 2 years and older for the first test in the herd
- for subsequent tests there will be subsidised testing for dairy cattle 4 years and older
- subsidised testing will end when herds achieve 3 consecutive annual negative herd tests (RD2 status),

or achieve one negative herd test (RD1 status), once the whole herd has been raised under JDCAP.

Benefits from participation

Participation in the TCP2 will provide a pathway for allowing the sale of low-risk dairy cattle within Victoria. Low-risk dairy cattle are defined as dairy cattle that are

- JDCAP accredited (ie raised during a period of accepted hygienic calf rearing practices aimed at minimising transmission of JD), in participating herds with a low reactor prevalence, and
- following epidemiological assessment, are not classed as "high risk" dairy cattle.

The introduction of low-risk dairy cattle may occur without affecting the status of the purchaser's herd in Victoria (Refer to other Agnotes). However, low-risk dairy cattle as defined may not be eligible for unrestricted movement interstate, into other BJD zones or into CattleMAP herds at this time.

There is a new policy on sale of land now linked to participation in TCP2. For farms participating in TCP2, there will be no restriction on grazing a new dairy cattle herd once "Tested Low Prevalence" (TLP) or better status is reached and there have been no clinical cases of BJD within 12 months of the date of sale of the land. In this situation, there is considered no "effect" on the land beyond the industry norm for farms grazing non-assessed dairy herds. Properties for sale that have grazed TCP2 herds which have reached TLP or better status without clinical cases for 12 months, can be sold without official (JD-related) restriction on the land. However, purchasers of any grazing land will need to ensure that the land is suitable for any specific purpose for which it is intended to be used. Studs and CattleMAP owners will need to take particular care in the selection of land for grazing (Refer to other Agnotes).

Which herds can enter TCP2?

Herds in the current TCP program will be invited to participate in TCP2 but they must be in JDCAP. Herds that are not in the current program but have an Infected

(IN) status and are in JDCAP are also eligible to participate. Owners must also submit a completed application form through their approved veterinarian to the DPI Senior Veterinary Officer (SVO) for the Region if they wish to participate in TCP2. The application to the SVO must declare the existence of JDCAP, individual animal identification and herd breeding records. Where Suspect (SU) herds test (at owner's cost) and detect infection, the costs of that test can be reimbursed to the farmer if they enter the TCP2.

All participating herds must have JDCAP, however JDCAP may be provisional for the first year. A conditional JDCAP certificate is valid for 12 months and will not be renewed unless certain corrective actions requested by the approved vet are completed in order to comply properly with the calf rearing conditions of the program.

What testing will be required and how much does it cost?

On the first occasion there will be subsidised herd testing for cattle 2 years and older. After this the TCP2 offers fully subsidised herd testing of eligible dairy cattle (4 years of age or older) and veterinary advisory services. Only DPI accredited private vets (Approved vets) can perform the testing (and supervise JDCAP). If the owner wishes to pay for testing younger age groups, then 2 and 3 year old reactors will be removed from the herd with compensation paid. Testing will be audited so that payment is only made for testing of eligible dairy cattle. If owners elect to conduct whole herd tests, the Approved vet should submit samples from eligible cattle separately and clearly mark this on the submission. ie two submissions, one for eligible dairy cattle, one for younger dairy cattle and clearly marked which is which.

What happens to the animals that test positive?

Animals that test positive to the blood test must be removed from the herd, to slaughter, as quickly as possible after testing is completed and at least before the end of

their current lactation. Animal Health Officers from DPI will assist herd owners with this process. Compensation of \$300 per reactor is paid to the owner plus the carcass value at slaughter is retained by the owner. Reactors which are deemed 'clinical' should be processed by a knackery or slaughtered on the property and disposed of in accordance with EPA requirements.. The owner is eligible for compensation of \$100.

How long do I have to test?

Subsidised testing ceases once herds achieve RD2 status, OR achieve one whole herd negative test (RD1 status), once their whole herd has been reared under the JDCAP. However, even before these targets are achieved, herds that demonstrate low levels of BJD infection through testing and have calves reared under JDCAP, will have greater trading opportunities. Under the National Rules, RD2 status is given when a herd achieves 2 negative tests 2 years apart (and all reactors have been culled from the herd). Herd owners in TCP2 are encouraged to gain RD2 status by achieving 3 successive annual negative tests.

For more information

For advice on how to apply for JDCAP or the TCP2, producers should contact their private veterinarian, local DPI Animal Health staff or go to <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming/bjd> or refer to the Agriculture notes:

- Johne's disease calf accreditation program (JDCAP)
- Enhanced trading options for land carrying dairy cattle in JDCAP and TCP2
- Enhanced trading options for dairy herds in the Victorian Johne's disease control program
- Purchasing breeding cattle and minimising the risk of buying bovine Johne's disease

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