



Keeping bovine Johne's disease out of a herd

Updated: December 2005

AG0915

ISSN 1329-8062

Lachlan King, Tatura

By following a few simple principles, owners can greatly minimise the risk of introducing bovine Johne's disease (BJD) into their herd.

The principles are:

- Avoid buying infected cattle
- Minimise introduction of BJD by other means
- Prevent spread of BJD in case it has already been introduced.

Avoid buying infected cattle

As BJD infection is estimated to be in at least 25% of Victorian dairy herds, the risk of buying infected dairy cattle is high. Although BJD is uncommon in beef herds, some risk still exists. A self-replacing herd, using only artificial insemination or embryo transfer, is the safest option. However, if cattle must be purchased, it is vital owners take all reasonable steps to avoid introducing BJD.



Figure 1. Insist on a BJD Vendor Declaration when purchasing cattle.

The safest herds to buy from are CattleMAP certified. CattleMAP is a voluntary, industry-driven, national program to identify, protect and promote herds that have a low risk of being infected with bovine Johne's disease. Other low-risk sources of cattle include 'Check Test' and JDCAP (dairy) herds.

When purchasing cattle, insist on either a Beef Only Declaration or a Dairy BJD Assurance Score Declaration. These forms are available from any DPI office. (Refer

Agriculture Notes: *Beef Only* or: *The Dairy BJD Assurance Score - the higher the score the higher the assurance.*)

Purchasing stock from a 'Non-Assessed' or low BJD assurance dairy herd should not be taken to imply freedom from BJD - you simply don't know whether or not BJD is present.

Minimise introduction of BJD by other means

Points to consider include:

- Minimise your risks when agisting. Do not allow contact of calves less than 12 months of age with adult cattle, regardless of their origin. (Refer to Agriculture Note: *Avoiding bovine Johne's disease when agisting cattle*)
- Boundaries should be securely fenced to keep out stray cattle.
- Drainage channels and waterways should be fenced off to prevent access by cattle.
- On-farm water sources (eg. dams with on-farm catchment, or bores) are preferable, if possible reticulated to drinking troughs.
- Insist that service personnel and contractors clean boots and equipment before entering the property.
- Deer, goats and camelids (alpacas, llamas, etc) can be infected with BJD. These species should not be allowed to contaminate pastures grazed by cattle less than 12 months old.

Prevent spread of BJD in case it has already been introduced

BJD may be present in a herd for some years before it is detected. Dairy farmers have the opportunity to limit spread of BJD during calf rearing. This is more difficult for most beef farmers.

Safe rearing of dairy calves involves:

- Separating calves from their mothers within 12 hours of birth. Never use nurse cows to rear calves.
- Rearing cattle less than 12 months old on 'clean' pasture. Avoid any pasture that has been contaminated

by the manure of adult cattle (including effluent from the dairy) in the last 12 months.

- Preventing access of cattle less than 12 months old to potentially contaminated water (particularly dairy effluent) by appropriate siting of calf paddocks, fencing and drainage. (Refer to Agriculture Note: *Johne's Disease Calf Accreditation Program*).

Further information

Further information about keeping BJD out of cattle herds can be obtained from Animal Health staff at your nearest DPI office or on the DPI external site: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming/bjd>.

Acknowledgement

The original author of this note was Kit Button and the previous version was published in November 2001.

The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.