

# Johne's Disease Key Facts



- Johne's disease (JD) is a significant constraint on cattle production within N. Ireland.
- Infected cattle can have production losses before obvious clinical signs are seen.
- JD could be present on your farm even if you haven't seen 'classic' scouring cattle as many cattle in the pre-clinical stages of disease will be culled due to poor productivity.
- Control is challenging and requires ongoing long term commitment over several years.
- Infection usually happens following the ingestion of the bacteria through consuming milk contaminated with infected dung.
- Significant gains can be made quickly using a test and cull strategy to reduce the overall burden of infection on the farm.
- One cow can excrete very large numbers of the bacteria into the environment. Therefore the earliest possible removal of such animals and a high standard of hygiene where calves are kept are central to avoiding calves becoming infected.
- The most common route of entry of infection onto farms is through the introduction of pre-clinically infected cattle.
- A voluntary programme for the control of Johne's disease is currently under development by AHWNI.

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or speak to your local vet.**



## The Disease

Johne's disease is an infectious bacterial disease of the digestive tract of cattle and other ruminants. Typically cattle become infected during the early weeks of life through the ingestion of bacteria shed in the faeces from infected adult cattle. The disease is slowly progressive with signs only becoming apparent in adult animals, typically between 3 and 5 years of age. The signs vary depending upon the stage of infection but begin with reduced productivity leading to weight loss, scour and ultimately emaciation and death. Often animals will be culled before the classic signs of a thin scouring adult animal appear. In these cases Johne's disease could be contributing to an excessively high cull rate.

## Key Principles for Infection Control

- Remove by slaughter all infected cattle as early as is practically possible.
- Calves born to infected cows are more likely to be infected – consider beefing these to remove them from the herd while still comparatively young.
- Maintain high hygiene standards around calves, e.g. thorough and frequent cleaning of calving boxes.
- Avoid close contact of more than one calf with one cow.
- Avoid calf exposure to adult animal dung (e.g. drains/run-offs/slurry spread on young cattle pasture).
- Avoid pooling milk/colostrum including the sharing of milk and colostrum from other farms.
- Avoid as far as practicable re-introduction of infection from other farms through cattle purchases/shared equipment/slurry spreading.
- Remember one negative diagnostic test result does not necessarily mean the animal is not infected.

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