



04.04.16

NEW certificated training programme launched for vets in Johne's disease control

4th April 2016 – BCVA and Action Johne's are delighted to unveil a new online training programme for vets to help in the control of Johne's disease on farm. Designed by leading Johne's vet Karen Bond in consultation with the National Johne's Technical Group, the online training modules provide an easy-to-access way to check and assess knowledge. Vets completing the course will become BCVA accredited Johne's veterinary advisors.

With milk purchasers covering over 80% of milk by volume signed up to ensure their farmers adopt one of the 6 control strategies in the National Johne's Management Plan by 30th September 2016, having up to date training for vets, to enable them to give the right advice for the right farms in a bespoke programme is an essential part of managing Johne's disease on farm – and for the UK.

Owen Atkinson, education lead for the BCVA said: "We hope that vets across the country will take up the opportunity to become an accredited Johne's veterinary advisor. Johne's disease is complicated and it's essential that members of our profession have the up to date knowledge to enable them to make the right recommendations for their dairy clients to manage control on farm."

Once training has been passed, vets will be entered onto a register and their new skills will be made public through an interactive map on the Action Johne's website: www.actionjohnesuk/.org

Lyndon Edwards, Chairman of the Action Johne's Steering Group said, "We know farmers and milk purchasers across the country are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of tacking Johne's disease as a way of helping manage many other problems on farm. Being able to signpost farmers to accredited vets with the right knowledge to help them will become an important part of our toolbox to tackle this costly problem on farm."

Johne's disease can adversely affect the physical and economic performance of a dairy herd. A recent study of 385 UK Dairy Herds by James Hanks of the University of Reading (2013) showed that Johne's disease test positive cows were 2x more likely to have a cell count > 200,000 cells/ml and were 2x more likely to have milk yields 25% below their adjusted herd average. Johne's disease costs can rise to excess of 1-2p/ litre with higher disease incidences and these costs remain for a number of years until the disease is brought under control. However, international experience has shown that if a rigorous control program is implemented and applied robustly Johne's disease can be brought under control. In Denmark the Johne's disease test prevalence for herds adopting the national control program fell from 10% to 2% over 6 years.

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Notes to editor's

1. Johne's disease is a chronic, debilitating and irreversible disease of ruminants caused by infection with *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP)
2. Animals are usually infected as calves with at least 80% of infections occurring within the first month of life. Infection is mainly caused by ingesting faeces often through contaminated bedding, udders, teats or buckets or from colostrum or milk. Much less commonly the disease can be acquired in the womb or later in life.
3. Youngstock in particular can be infected but may not yet be infectious, and so may be difficult to detect with currently available tests.
4. Many animals will carry the infection harmlessly throughout their lives without being a danger to themselves or to others, but some become infectious, and some become clinically diseased. We can use the tests currently available to detect infectious animals and manage them effectively.
5. Johne's disease is almost always introduced to a herd by purchasing infected replacement breeding stock (calves, heifers, cows or bulls).
6. Johne's disease can adversely affect the physical and economic performance of a dairy herd. A recent study of 385 UK Dairy Herds by James Hanks of the University of Reading (2013) showed that Johne's disease test positive cows were 2x more likely to have a cell count > 200,000 cells/ml and were 2x more likely to have milk yields 25% below their adjusted herd average. Johne's disease costs can rise to excess of 1-2p/ litre with higher disease incidences and these costs remain for a number of years until the disease is brought under control.
7. With Johne's disease, the cost of the disease is not just from clinical disease of infected animals. In most herds, the major costs come from increased susceptibility to other conditions and increased forced culling and the retention of cows that should otherwise be culled.
8. International experience has shown that if a rigorous control program is implemented and applied robustly Johne's disease can be brought under control. In Denmark the Johne's disease test prevalence for herds adopting the national control program has reduced from 10% to 2% over 6 years.

Action Group on Johne's

The Action Johne's Initiative has been developed by the Action Group on Johne's, which is an open forum for industry stakeholders interested in tackling Johne's. The Action Group on Johne's is chaired by Lyndon Edwards, a dairy farmer from Gloucester, who is also a Director of OMSCo and Chairman of Dairy UK's Farmers' Forum. The secretariat support to the Action Group on Johne's is provided by Dairy UK.

National Johne's Management Plan

The Action Johne's Initiative constitutes the active implementation of the requirements of the National Johne's Management Plan, which was developed by the Action Group on Johne's, unveiled in November 2014 for industry consultation which closed in February 2015.

Delivery of Action Johne's

Funding for the Action Johne's Initiative will be provided by AHDB Dairy and matched in total by an equal contribution from individual milk purchasers, both co-op and private. The Action Johne's Delivery Team consists of a consortium of SAC Consulting and RAFT Solutions Ltd and XLVets. The team were appointed through their experience in delivering the Paraban project, recent Defra RDPE Johne's training, in put to the UK Cattle Expert Group and the expertise of George Gunn, George Caldow, Colin Mason, David Black, Jonathan Statham and Alastair Hayton, all of whom will be involved in the project.

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