

MEDIA RELEASE

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Johne's disease testing underpins high assurance scores for cattle

Under the new framework for managing Johne's disease (JD) in beef cattle, producers nationwide have until 30 June 2018 to conduct their first laboratory test if they wish to maintain a Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS) of 7 or 8 for their herd(s).

The voluntary J-BAS tool provides a scoring system to help producers manage the risk of cattle becoming infected with JD. The highest levels of assurance (i.e., J-BAS 7 or 8) are underpinned by veterinary advice covering on-farm biosecurity planning, along with periodic laboratory testing of the herd.

During the transition period, which ran from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, former Beef Only herds and those from the Protected Zone or Beef Protected Area automatically became J-BAS 7. Herds from CattleMAP and those in the Free Zone (Western Australia) became J-BAS 8.

Many producers have already conducted their first test, which is to be repeated every three years, securing their high assurance scores. For others, the choice to maintain a J-BAS of 7 or 8 will depend on the J-BAS requirements of their buyers – certain scores may be sought by stud breeders and those actively managing JD in their herd.

A Check Test is carried out on samples from 50 animals within the herd (or all animals if the herd has less than 50 head). These samples must be collected by a vet and sent to the laboratory by the 30 June deadline in order to continue declaring a J-BAS of 7 or 8.

If samples for the first Check Test are not collected and submitted to the laboratory by the deadline of 30 June 2018, producers can only declare a maximum J-BAS of 6, and will need to conduct a Sample Test (potentially involving more animals than 50) to return to a J-BAS of 7 or 8.

This will be of particular relevance for producers providing animals to producers or markets that stipulate a J-BAS 7 or 8 requirement, such as for entry to WA. (Information on WA requirements is available at: Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS) and what it means for WA producers).

It should be noted that acceptable tests for Sample and Check Tests are faecal culture or HT-J PCR¹. Use of the ELISA² (blood) test is disallowed for some markets (including WA) and discouraged for other markets because of its lower accuracy.

Producers should contact their veterinarian to seek advice on, and arrange for, testing. Vets should check with the jurisdictional laboratories for the correct collection, storage and transport protocols before taking samples.

Those looking to learn more about the J-BAS tool and its requirements can start with the Frequently Asked Questions at www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/johnes-disease-frequently-asked-questions/

J-BAS is managed by Animal Health Australia on behalf of the Cattle Council of Australia, who represent the beef cattle industry.

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About Animal Health Australia

Animal Health Australia works in partnership with our Members and other stakeholders to keep Australia free of new and emerging diseases and to improve animal health, enhance market access and foster resilience and integrity of the Australian animal health system.

¹ High Throughput-Johne's polymerase chain reaction

² Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay