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# ahi

## MONTHLY NEWS

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AHI Press Release

**Alison Burrell joins the team at AHI**



IBR Eradication Programme

**The cost of IBR in the dairy herd**



National Mastitis Control Programme

**No quick-fix when it comes to mastitis control!**



Irish Johne's Control Programme

**Making sense of Johne's testing**



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# Health Psychologist Alison Burrell joins the team at Animal Health Ireland

Grainne Dwyer, AHI, Communications Manager

Animal Health Ireland is pleased to announce the appointment of Alison Burrell. Alison is a Chartered Health Psychologist, having qualified through the NHS Education for Scotland training programme. While working in an in-patient NHS setting, Alison gained experience in designing and delivering one-to-one and group health behaviour change interventions. In this role she developed an interest in providing specialised communication training to healthcare professionals to successfully deliver collaborative behaviour change consults with clients, which she is now keen to apply to animal health.

More recently, Alison has worked as a post-doctoral researcher for Teagasc, Athenry on a *Safefood*-funded project 'Use of antimicrobials in animal health on the island of Ireland: knowledge, attitudes and behaviour'. Here she developed behaviour change intervention recommendations, to address antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic use on farms in Ireland. She has also collaborated with colleagues at UCD School of Veterinary Medicine to examine the perceived barriers and facilitators of parasite control programmes on Thoroughbred Studs.

Dr David Graham said "I am pleased to welcome Alison to AHI. In her role, she will bring a new and exciting dimension to the work of AHI. Encouraging and facilitating behaviour change is central to all of our activities, and Alison's skills, experience and knowledge will further enhance our capabilities in this area in support of a range of programmes.



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# The cost of IBR in the dairy herd

Maria Guelbenzu, IBR Programme Manager

- ▶ **IBR is widespread in Ireland.**
- ▶ **IBR can give rise to significant economic losses in farms.**
- ▶ **Subclinical infections may still be associated with a reduction in milk yield.**
- ▶ **IBR is costing the Irish dairy industry approximately €62 million annually.**

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is widespread in Ireland where there is evidence that 75% of cattle herds have been exposed to the virus. IBR is a highly infectious disease of cattle caused by bovine herpesvirus 1 (BoHV-1) that can give rise to significant economic losses in farms.

IBR spreads typically by close contact between animals although airborne spread of virus may occur over distances of up to 5 metres and it can also be spread by using contaminated semen, equipment and by people. Clinical signs may include dullness and reduced appetite, high temperature, rapid and loud breathing, sometimes with coughing, fluid discharge from nose and eyes, inflammation of the throat and, on occasion, death. Infection can also be accompanied by sudden reduced milk production, abortion, nervous signs (normally only in young calves). However, it is also recognised that, in herds with endemic infection, the course of infection can be sub-clinical but nevertheless, still be associated with a reduction in milk yield and negative reproductive outcomes.

**IBR ERADICATION PROGRAMME**

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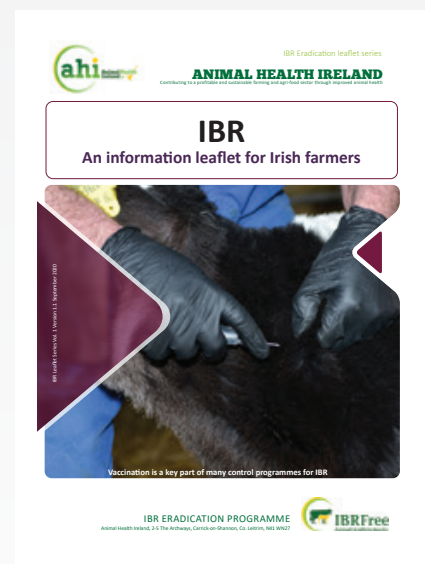
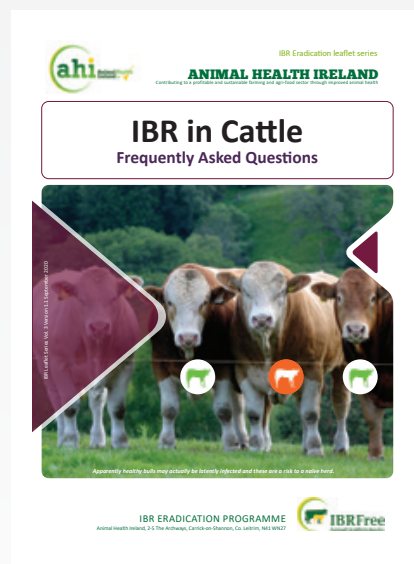
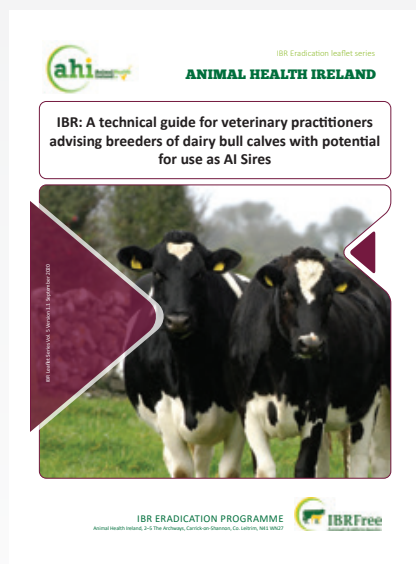
While the economic impact of infection may be greatest following initial introduction into a herd, there are also ongoing losses in herds with established infection, as susceptible cattle are exposed to the virus. In dairy herds a reduction in milk yield can also be a significant outcome of infection and in some cases, the main presenting sign.

Several studies have investigated the effects that exposure to this virus can have on milk production. One study that looked into the effect of IBR outbreaks on milk production in free dairy herds in the Netherlands, found that losses averaged 0.92kg of milk per cow per day during a 9-week period. Another study explored the potential economic impact of subclinical IBR infection in the UK and found that IBR-seropositive cows produced 2.6 kg per day less milk over two years (study period) compared with cows that were seronegative.

An Irish study found that in infected dairy herds recorded a reduction in milk yield, as well as in milk fat and protein, highlighting sub-optimal milk production in positive herds. It concluded that profitability was reduced by an average of €60 per cow per year, aggregating to a national figure of €62M of foregone profit.

## Where to get more advice on IBR?

Detailed information leaflets on IBR and herd biosecurity, along with answers to frequently asked questions on IBR and specific guidance for herds with bull calves that are potential AI sires, are available from the IBR section of the Animal Health Ireland website [click here](#).

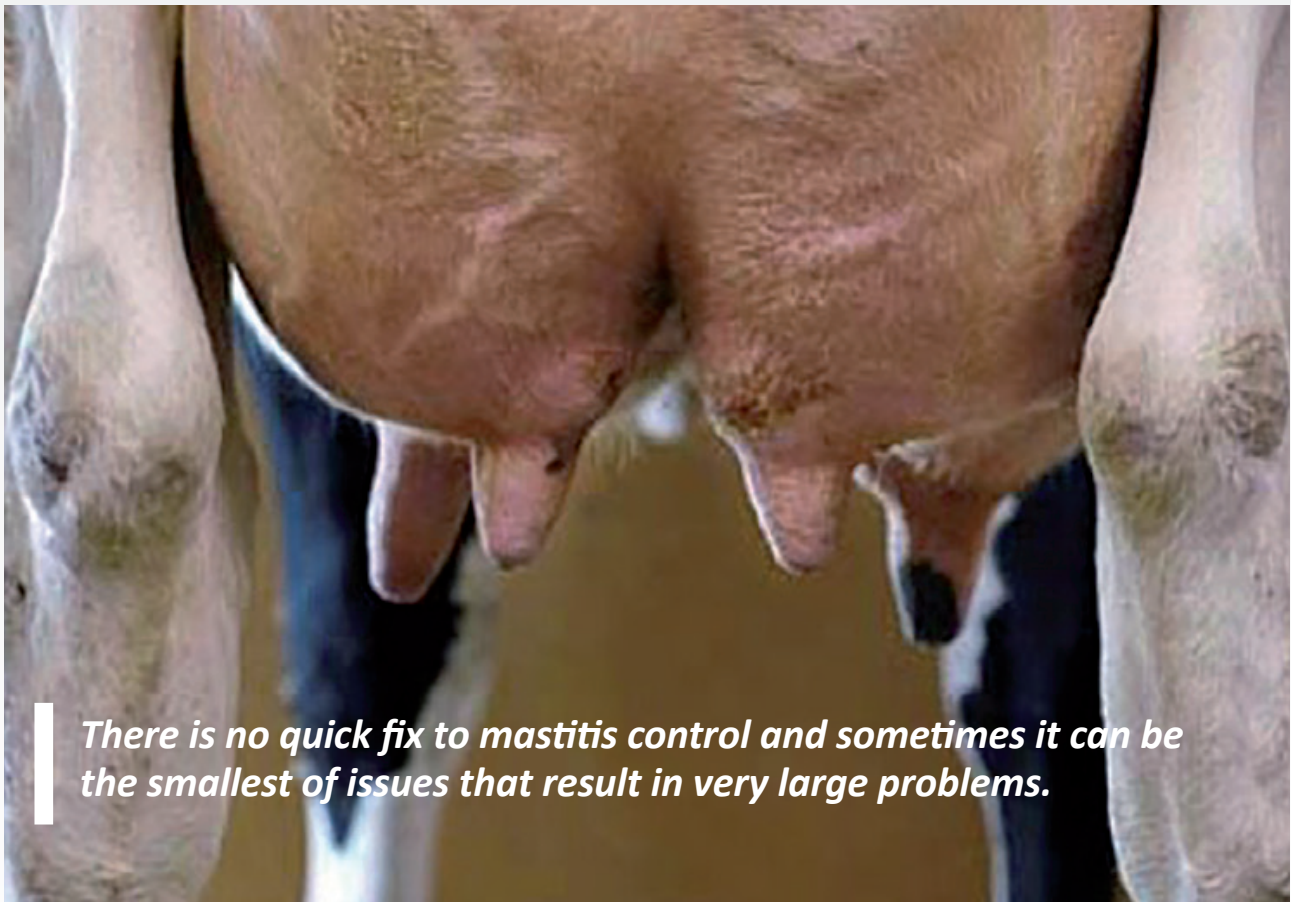


# No quick-fix when it comes to mastitis control!

Michelle McGrath, Assistant CellCheck Programme Manager

**"For over 35 years the more I learn about mastitis, the more I realize how much I do not know",** explains Michelle McGrath, Assistant Programme Manager for the CellCheck programme.

Looking back to my youth, growing up on a dairy farm, if a cow had mastitis you gave her a few tubes and more often than not she got better, or so it seemed. Nowadays, when farmers have a cow with mastitis, they are encouraged to look at the bigger picture, or even better still, to have good management systems in place to reduce the risk of mastitis happening in the first place. There are many different elements required for in effective mastitis control and consequently, many opportunities for things to go wrong. What I am trying to say is there is no quick fix to mastitis control and sometimes it can be the smallest of issues that result in very large problems.



*There is no quick fix to mastitis control and sometimes it can be the smallest of issues that result in very large problems.*

I spoke with Martin Davin in Laois this month as part of our farmer profile and he explained to me about a recent problem he was experiencing with the cows on the farm.

*"I began noticing a gradual increase in clinical cases of mastitis in late Spring and the cows were becoming very cranky in the parlour. I set about investigating it with my Veterinary Practitioner, Co-Op advisor and Milking Machine technician and from this collaborative approach we identified a high proportion of cows with teat end damage. The cause of which was the vacuum being too high in the clusters".*

Martin says that looking back, it was probably a problem for longer than he had realized. The issue is sorted now and the cows have settled and teat ends are returning to normal.

## Some timely CellCheck reminders for July

### REGULAR MACHINE CHECKS

Using simple daily, weekly and monthly checks will keep your machine problem free, and provide an early warning if anything is amiss. Check out the farm Guidelines on the AHI website for more detail [click here](#).

### TEAT DISINFECTION

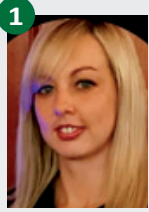
Do not stop during the summer months! Completely cover every teat, of every cow, after every milking. It's the most effective way of preventing new infections and reducing SCC. Some disinfectants also act as fly repellents, helping reduce the number of flies in the parlour during these warm evenings- don't forget that flies also carry mastitis-causing bacteria.

### MILK RECORD

By recording your cows regularly (at least 6 times per lactation) you can easily see what's happening within your herd- which are the problem cows or top performers? Use the CellCheck Farm Summary Report to see the areas of excellence, and those that need attention. All this information will be extremely useful when it comes to drying off cows.

## CELLCHECK REGIONAL COORDINATORS

A Resource and Point of Contact for *CellCheck* Activities in your Area



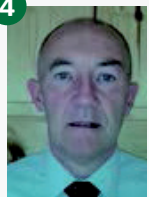
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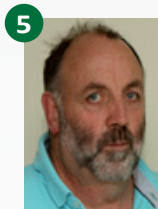
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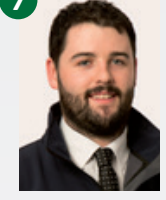
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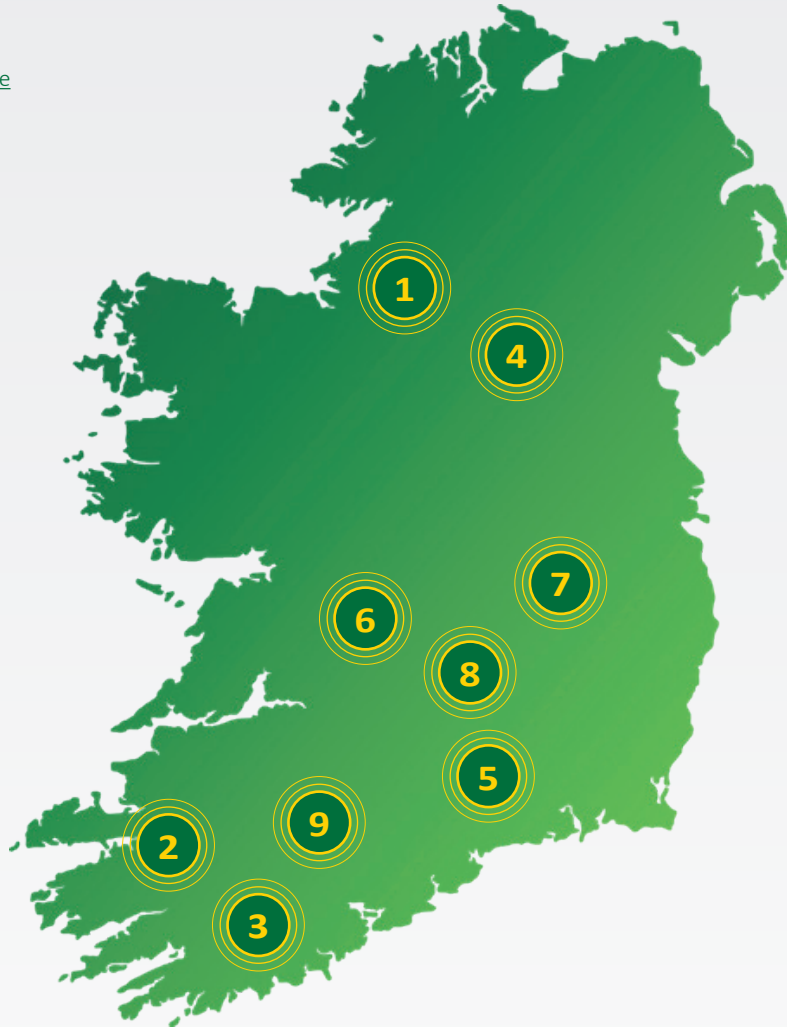
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NATIONAL MASTITIS CONTROL PROGRAMME

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# Making sense of Johne's testing

Lawrence Gavey, Johne's disease Programme Manager

**A** common misconception of Johne's disease is that control is ineffective because the tests are inaccurate. The laboratory tests are in fact very good, but unfortunately the nature of the disease makes detection difficult until late in the course of infection.

To take this into account, successful control strategies in Ireland and elsewhere for this disease focus on two aspects: risk rather than certainty, and primary focus at herd level rather than at individual animal level. However, individual animal test results can still be useful.

The annual whole herd test under the Irish Johne's Control Programme shows whether a herd is likely to be infected or not. Annual repeats of the herd test will build confidence in that assessment.

If the herd is infected, then all animals, and especially test-positive animals, are at high risk of being infected and can be managed accordingly to reduce spread and impacts of infection within the farm. The programme provides management plans with veterinary advice, customised for each farm, to guide that control of spread.



IRISH JOHNE'S CONTROL PROGRAMME

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If the testing shows a low risk of infection in the herd, the management plan is likely to focus on preventing introduction of infection onto the farm.

The ELISA test on blood or milk samples aims to detect antibodies produced by the animal's immune system in response to Johne's infection. Animals may be infected for many years before an antibody response occurs, so a negative result cannot be interpreted as proving that the animal is not infected. But a herd test in which all ELISA results are negative supports a low-risk assessment.

In a small number of cases (approximately 2%), the ELISA test may incorrectly identify a component of the blood or milk sample as an anti-Johne's antibody. The Johne's programme supports dung PCR testing of these animals to confirm the presence of Johne's disease, but again there is a long delay between an animal being infected and testing positive on the PCR test, so a negative PCR result does not prove that an animal is not infected.

In a herd which is known to be infected, any animal with a positive or inconclusive ELISA (blood or milk) can be regarded as being infected. To rank test-positive animals for risk, you can use the test values displayed for each animal on your ICBF Johne's screen. These values measure the level of antibodies detected. Animals with high levels are more likely to be spreading infection and to be positive on repeat testing, if kept in the herd. You can enhance this ranking of test-positive animals by taking into account the time interval since the preceding TB test and since calving, animal's age, previous test results especially whether the test values have been increasing, and infection history of the animal's dam.



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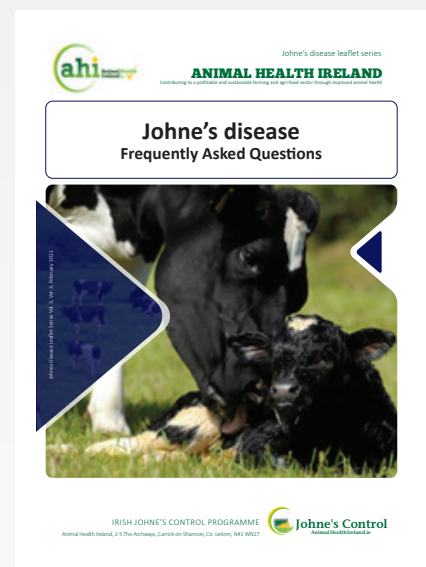
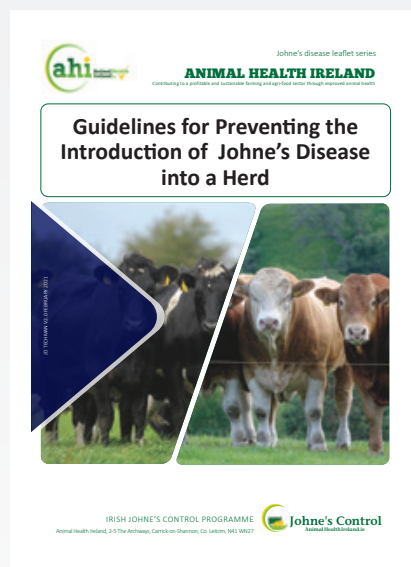
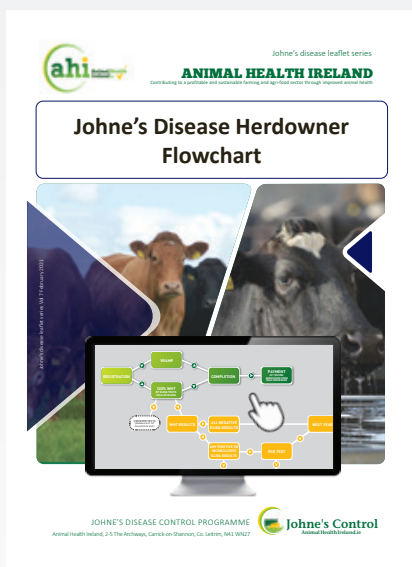
Once you have ranked these animals by risk, you should also consider non-Johne's factors such as age, milk production figures, pregnancy status, and other diseases such as mastitis and lameness to prioritise animals for culling.

In a herd which is not known to be infected, any animal with a positive or inconclusive ELISA should be considered with suspicion, even if followed up with a dung PCR test with a negative result.

How you treat these test-positive and suspect animals is not defined by the programme, except they should not be sold to another herd for breeding. The programme does recommend that these animals be removed from the herd as soon as practicable, and if they are retained in the herd they should be calved separately from the rest of the herd in designated pens or other areas.

In summary, do not interpret a negative PCR test as meaning the animal is not infected, and do use all of the test result data and other information so that your decisions towards risk management of Johne's disease are soundly based on evidence.

For more information on interpreting and using test data for effective control of Johne's disease in your herd, contact your veterinary practitioner.



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