



November 2023

Are you a small holder, or non-Red Tractor Accredited?

Changes to Slaughterhouse regulations from December 13th will affect you!

Changes in legislation from the 13th December 2023 will require all producers selling livestock for slaughter (that are not Red Tractor accredited) to have had an annual farm veterinary attestation visit. This is to allow meat products produced on these farms to be exported out of the UK. If you take stock to abattoirs that export all or part of the carcasses, then you may need an 'attestation visit'.



FOA small holders – even if you receive your meat directly back from the abattoir, it is likely that you will still require an attestation certificate, as many of the off-cuts and by-products will be exported outside of the UK.

For products to be exported, **non-Red Tractor farms** must have had, in the 12 months leading up to 13th December, one of the following:

- a veterinary visit to visualise all your stock, discuss biosecurity and sign an attestation certificate

or

- an Animal Health and Welfare Pathway (AHWP) receipt, meaning all visit(s), testing and paperwork must be completed. This option is fully government funded - eligibility and details can be found at <https://apply-for-an-annual-health-and-welfare-review.defra.gov.uk/apply/guidance-for-farmers>
 - Please note that if you are not already registered for the AHWP, it is unlikely you will be able to complete it before December this year. Please consider the Pathway as a fully-funded method of making sure your stock receive veterinary attestation next year.

Why is this happening? Upon leaving the EU, farms sending stock to abattoirs have been allowed to 'self-certify' that their stock is receiving regular veterinary health visits. The main purpose of this is to ensure notifiable diseases, which cause serious harm to livestock (see full list at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2020/692/annex/I/division/3>), do not go undetected within any country exporting to the EU and beyond. Having a veterinary

attestation visit allows you to comply with Article 8(e) of Delegated Regulation 2020/692 – stating that you must have had a vet visit in the past 12 months. This visit is:

“for the purpose of the detection of, and information on, signs indicative of the occurrence of diseases, including those listed diseases referred to in Annex I (notifiable diseases)”

If you think these changes apply to you, we would urge you to read this short page of information: <https://www.bcva.org.uk/content/regulation>. *We are currently being advised that we cannot back-date attestation certificates.* Therefore, even if we have seen all your stock over the past 12 months (for example on a TB test), please contact us to arrange an attestation visit at your earliest convenience.

New TB testers + ATTs training as Vet Techs

Our farm team has expanded, and we are pleased to welcome George Hibbitt as our fifth Approved TB Tester (ATT)! Hailing from the midlands, George has been working as a TB tester since the beginning of the year and has recently moved down to the Southwest with his partner. George has already got himself a Golden Retriever puppy, who'll be coming around with him in his van, alongside his Cockapoo.

Two of our ATTs are undergoing additional training to become Vet Techs, alongside their TB testing duties. This means we will soon have four members of staff qualified to mobility score cattle, carry out body condition scoring and perform calf disbudding.

Bluetongue – Caution over new strain in Europe

Both France and Holland are experiencing outbreaks of a new strain of Bluetongue virus (BTV). BTV is spread by midges and can infect ruminants and camelids. The most common strains in France (BTV-4 and BTV-8) have commercial vaccines available. Unfortunately, a new strain (BTV-3) has emerged in Holland, meaning trade in live sheep and cattle from the UK to/from the Netherlands is no longer possible. There are no reported cases in the UK currently, but the most recent [DEFRA report](#) has set our infection risk level as **medium**.



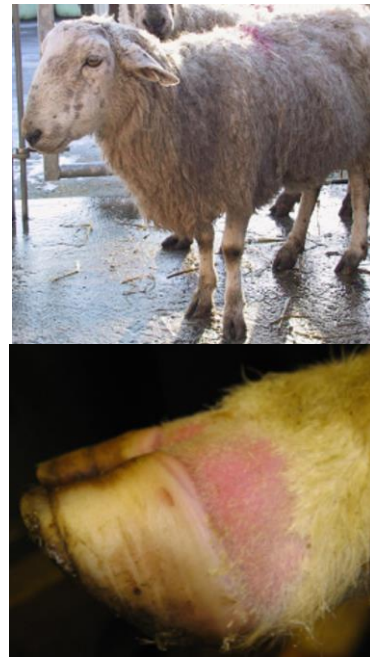
Map showing 416 outbreaks of BTV-3 in the Netherlands reported by NVWA from the 5th of September to 29th of September 2023. These reports have not been confirmed by ADIS or WOAH.

(Map available at Current animal diseases in the Netherlands and Europe | Animal diseases | NVWA)

What to look out for?

Clinical signs include-

- ulcers in the mouth
- discharge of mucus and drooling from the mouth and nose
- swelling of the mouth, head (picture opposite), neck and the junction of hair and hoof
- red skin and swelling (blood pooling beneath the surface – picture opposite)
- high fever (often more than 40.0C!)
- sheep often appear stiff and unwilling to move
- abortion



Please contact us if you are concerned that members of your herd or flock are showing these signs. Being on the South Coast makes our counties vulnerable to wind-born midges from Europe so vigilance is always advised.

[MyHealthyHerd - Johnes Management Upgrade](#)

What is Johnes?

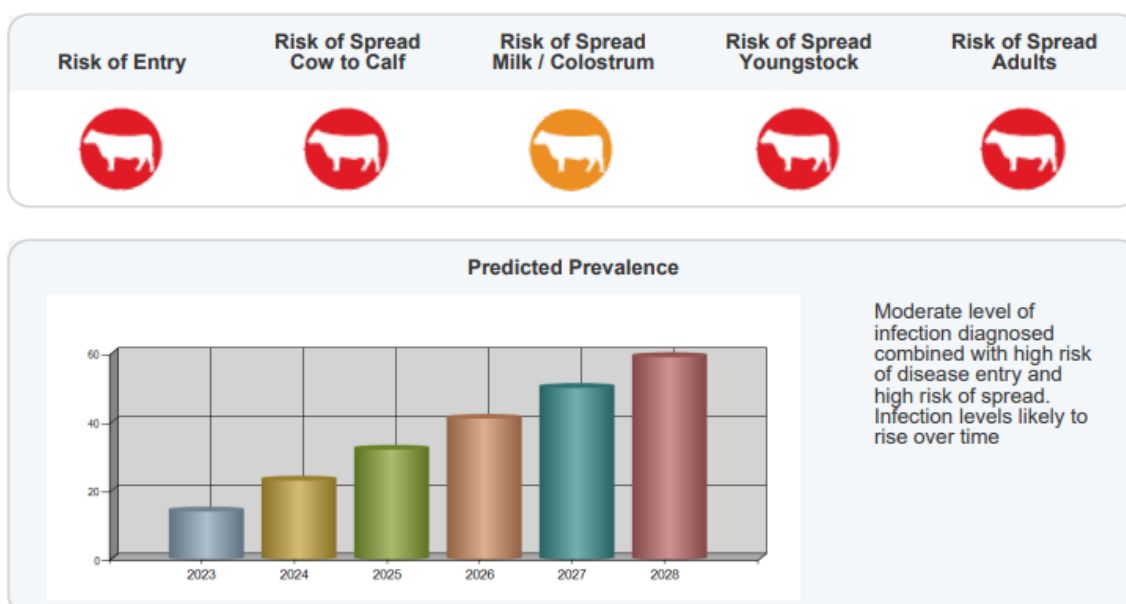
Johnes is the name given to the disease caused by *Mycobacterium avium ss. paratuberculosis* ('MAP' bacteria). Spread mainly via dung, though also through milk and colostrum, this bacterium generally infects newly born calves. However, it generally doesn't start causing disease until animals are two years old, and often not until they are much older than that! The bacteria live in the immune system centres of the gut and stimulate inappropriate immune and inflammatory responses.

The animal's immune response is weakened, making cows far more likely to succumb to diseases such as lameness and mastitis. During the final stage of disease, the gut becomes so inflamed and thickened that cows can no longer absorb nutrients (particularly protein) and they begin to waste. This is often accompanied by the tell-tale hose-pipe diarrhea. However, because of the immune suppression, it is likely that many Johnes-positive cows are culled, before showing any sign of wasting or scour.



What are Castle Vets doing to help reduce disease levels in the herds we care for?

In line with Red Tractor requirements, we have updated the way we provide Johnes Reports to our clients. Dairy clients (and any interested Beef clients) now have access to MyHealthyHerd, an online platform that allows us to assess biosecurity risks, upload test results and analyze herd issues in a far more effective way.



The software can process answers to a simple questionnaire, alongside disease rates, and predict disease outcomes over the next few years. With the national prevalence of Johnes under more scrutiny than ever, we feel this service will help our clients to reduce their herd's incidence and prevalence, leading to a healthier herd and healthier profit margins!

Effect of Calving Intervention on Suckler performance

With Autumn calving in full swing, we wanted to reach out to the spring calving herds that will be gearing up for winter. Body condition score is one of the most important factors in reducing dystocia (difficult births), second only to bull selection. Work done recently by SRUC (rural college and laboratory services) has delved deeper into the impact having to assist calvings has, with the results outlined below.

Calving difficulties can affect the subsequent performance of the cow in four ways:

- A reduction in milk yield
- An equivalent reduction in calf weaning weight
- A delay in the return to normal oestrus cycles due to endometritis (inflamed/infected womb)
- A more severe delay which results in the cow being barren, particularly for late calving cows in seasonal block calving herds.

The magnitude of these losses would depend on the degree of calving difficulty as illustrated in this table:

Calving difficulty (1-5 scale)	3	4	5
% drop in lactation yield	10	10	15
Equivalent reduction in calf weaning weight (kg)	15	15	25
Delays in re-breeding (days)	5	20	40
Increased risk of barrenness (%)	20	50	75
Total cows (£ / affected cow)	81	189	298

The AHDB Beef and Lamb calving difficulty scale is defined as follows-

- Score 2: Slight assistance, no equipment used
- Score 3: Mechanical assistance with a calving aid by the farmer
- Score 4: Veterinary assistance
- Score 5: Veterinary assistance for severe dystocia including surgical intervention

The nutrition of the cow/heifer in late pregnancy is critical, to ensure she is fit but not over fat. The last page of this newsletter is a direct copy of page 14 of the AHDB resource, '[Feeding Suckler Cows and Calves](#)'. Remember, if you buy concentrates, your feed company should be able to provide you with forage analysis for free! Make sure they take samples from several bales / different parts of the clamp, for the most accurate results.

Dry cows

Feed dry cows to enable them to be at the correct BCS at calving. Ideally, that means knowing calving date and being able to group cows by BCS and feed them accordingly.

During the dry period, rations should:

- Satisfy the cow's appetite, 1.5–2% of liveweight
- Provide sufficient vitamins and minerals
- Manage cows to reach target BCS for calving
- Ensure cows are strong for calving and produce good-quality colostrum

Cows that are too fat in late pregnancy will have difficulties due to deposition of fat narrowing the birth canal. Thin cows can lack the strength for calving, produce weak calves and poor-quality colostrum.

Cows should be dry for at least five weeks before calving to ensure there is enough colostrum for the new calf.

Managing BCS during the dry period

Body condition tends to vary throughout the year with feed supply; it is best to avoid extreme and rapid changes.

A cow weaned at BCS 3 will need to lose half a BCS to achieve a target of 2.5 at calving. Over five to six months of winter feeding, that equates to a loss of 0.25 kg/day.

A thin cow (less than BCS 2) will need to gain 0.5 kg/day over three months and needs access to either good-quality (10.5 MJ ME/kg DM) grass silage ad lib or poor silage supplemented with 1–2 kg of high-energy concentrate.

Where accurate calving dates are known, increase the feeding rate slightly, particularly in terms of protein supplementation, or include more silage in the four to six weeks pre-calving.

This will minimise body condition loss and promote colostrum production. Ensure the ration contains sufficient rumen degradable protein, which is important for calf health. Limiting feed to reduce calf weight during the last month of pregnancy can reduce cow fertility, colostrum quality and cow stamina at calving.

Ration quality towards the end of pregnancy

Many suckler cows are offered the same ration throughout their dry period, which means they are slightly overfed in early pregnancy and underfed at the end of pregnancy. During the last month of pregnancy, the calf's nutrient demand adds considerably to the cow's, when she is also producing colostrum and her appetite is reduced due to the size of the calf restricting rumen volume.

Outwintering

Outwintering is a low-cost option for dry cows, if suitable land and/or forage crops are available.

Hardy, native breeds suit this system well. Continental-bred cows can be outwintered, but care needs to be taken to avoid excessive BCS loss.

Outwintering can increase the cow's energy requirements by up to 15%, depending on weather conditions, in particularly wet and windy conditions. Careful consideration of mineral and vitamin supplementation is required for certain crops, e.g. brassicas.

For more information, see *Using brassicas for Better Returns*, available at ahdb.org.uk

