

Dear Herdowner

In association with Animal Health Ireland and the Department of Agriculture Blackwater Vet Clinic offers you the opportunity to screen your herd for Johne's at a reduced cost.

Johne's disease is a bacterial infection caused by *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* MAP. Initially the bacteria lives in the gut of affected cattle where they grow and slowly cause damage.

Eventually the bacteria spreads throughout the body.

Animals can become infected at any age but usually in the first few months of life, affected animals are usually between 3 and 5 years of age and signs include weight loss, reduced production, infertility, scour and death.

Importantly exposure to MAP does not always cause infection and infected animals do not become unwell until long after they become infected. Infected animals spread the bacteria to other animals long before they get sick themselves.

If animals with Johne's disease are culled due to reduced performance or infertility infected herds may never have cows with more obvious clinical signs.

There is no treatment for Johne's disease. There is no vaccination to prevent Johne's disease.

In general the reliability of Johne's tests are poor. Bulk milk analysis is the worst way to detect Johne's disease in your herd. The blood test is a better way to screen your herd. It is not very reliable and so one negative result does not always mean an animal is indeed negative however the blood test is very useful as a screening test and will give us a good idea of the overall herd status for Johne's disease.

If you wish to partake in this voluntary scheme an extra test for MAP antibodies will be applied to your herd brucellosis blood samples collected by us at your round brucellosis test every 2 years if you are a suckler farmer and every five years if you are a dairy farmer.

It costs 3.50 euro per blood sample and this must be paid to the Department of Agriculture by cheque which is enclosed in the blood box going to the lab. You must also sign a consent form to allow the lab transfer the test results to ICBF.