



EASTGATE VETERINARY CENTRE

133 Eastgate
Pickering
N. Yorkshire
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Johne's Disease

Cause

Johne's is caused by a bacterium, and most commonly calves pick up Johnes in the first few months of life (often at birth) from faeces shed by infected cows or from the colostrum/milk of the dam if she is infected. Rarely calves can be infected before birth via the placenta. The calf incubates the disease and classical signs occur usually between 2-7 years of age. Signs include:

- Profuse Scour - which is often frothy
- Weight Loss
- Yet retains a good appetite, appearing bright and well.
- 'Bottle jaw' due to protein loss may also occur

Clinical Signs

In dairy herds, these clinical signs are rarely seen because cows are often culled from the herd much earlier than this for poor performance. Johnes will contribute to:

- High cell counts
- Reduced fertility
- Poor milk yields
- Lameness

A dairy cow which is shedding Johnes will typically have average SCC results around 100,000 higher than a non-infected animal & will give around 800ml less milk per day of life.

Risk Factors

- Dirty dry cow accommodation & calving areas equals dirty udders!
- Pooling of colostrum/waste milk
- Grazing young stock on pasture which has had manure applied or following older cattle
- Water draining from cows to young stock areas
- Mixing young stock with mature animals
- Buying in animals from herds with unknown Johnes status

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is difficult due to the bacteria hiding away in the gut and shedding only intermittently. In beef herds we use a combination of blood sampling and faeces samples. For dairy herds, milk samples can be used but need to be carried out regularly to pick up the intermittent shedders. It is estimated that for every clinical case of Johnes seen that there are around another 20 subclinical cases present.

The disease is untreatable, and culling of affected individuals is strongly recommended.

Prevention

- Source replacements from herds with known low prevalence
- Avoid pooling of colostrum where possible
- Avoid young stock coming into contact with manure or water from the mature herd.

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In beef herds this is obviously difficult and control relies on prompt culling of affected cases and their offspring alongside whole herd testing on a regular basis.

We would encourage any dairy farm with unknown status for Johnes to consider doing a milk screen on 30 cows, please contact the practice for more details.

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