



Minimising the risk of BJD in a dairy bull beef enterprise

Updated: December 2005

AG0938

ISSN 1329-8062

Lachlan King, Tatura

Dairy bull beef is a popular enterprise for many properties in Victoria. The risks and impact of introducing bovine Johne's disease (BJD) can be minimised by taking the right precautions.

The risk

There is a risk of introducing BJD onto a property by buying dairy calves. BJD is far more common in dairy herds than in beef herds. Calves can be infected before they are born or shortly afterwards, in fact this is when they are most susceptible. Therefore it is quite possible that dairy bobby calves are already infected with BJD before they arrive on a property for dairy bull beef production.



Figure 1. It is possible that seemingly healthy bull calves are already infected with BJD prior to being purchased.

Minimising the risk of purchasing infected calves

The Dairy BJD Assurance Score Declaration forms are available from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). These allow vendors to declare the likelihood of their dairy herd having or spreading BJD. (Refer to Agriculture Note: 'The Dairy BJD Assurance Score – the higher the score the higher the assurance'. Once a score is obtained, the risk of purchasing BJD affected calves can be assessed.

Owners of herds with 'Infected' or 'Suspect' status are obliged to inform the purchaser of their BJD status. It is possible to purchase calves from herds with these statuses

without adversely affecting the BJD status of the purchaser's herd or property. However, a program should be developed with the purchaser's private vet and DPI animal health staff **prior to** purchasing these stock. This program will minimise the risk of spread of disease if calves are infected with BJD.

Minimising the effects of purchasing infected calves

The dairy bull beef industry is based on producing bulls of optimum weight by two years of age. An infected bull under good husbandry is unlikely to break down with BJD (lose weight and scour) before 2 years. Good worm control and sufficient quality feed, as well as reducing the possibility of break down, means that the bulls will reach market weight quicker and more efficiently. This reduces the chances that any of these animals will contaminate the property with BJD.

Risks can be further reduced by not grazing beef cows with calves at foot, or replacement heifers, on paddocks grazed by dairy bulls in the previous 12 months.

Any suspicion of BJD (scouring and/or wasting) should be investigated by a veterinarian.

Options for infected herds

Refer to Agriculture Note: *Control options for bovine Johne's disease in beef herds.*

Further information

Further information about BJD can be obtained from Animal Health staff at your nearest DPI office or on the DPI external site: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming/bjd>.

Acknowledgement

The original author of this note was Katrina Rainsford and the previous version was published in November 2001.

The advice provided in this publication is intended as a source of information only. Always read the label before using any of the products mentioned. The State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.