



BJD - WHERE TO FROM HERE?

**A FRESH APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF JOHNE'S
DISEASE IN CATTLE:
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR CATTLE PRODUCTION CONDITIONS**

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Paper

1

This paper has two purposes:

- **It summarises** the outcomes of discussions held in Canberra over two days (29-30 September 2015) by the Reference Group in the concluding workshop to the review of the long-standing approach to the management of Johne's disease (JD) in cattle.
- **It sets out** the key elements and rationale of an approach better suited to handling JD in cattle. The change is needed because of evolving practices, reduced funding and the growing influence of biosecurity considerations. As such it outlines a management plan for working with cattle production conditions.

Supporting Material

2

This paper sets out general principles only. Additional papers that support the general principles are being developed and will be released in the near future.

Participating Organisations

3

The organisations whose representatives took part in the discussions and whose contributions shaped the new approach are listed at Appendix A.

Finalisation of the Proposed Approach

4

The remaining steps in the finalisation of the approach and its introduction are set out at Appendix B.

MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR CATTLE PRODUCTION

CONDITIONS: SHIFTING THE THINKING

Developing the new approach: Background

5

JD in cattle is endemic in some cattle production areas of Australia but in other areas the disease is not known to exist (or exists at a low to very low level). A review of the *National BJD Strategic Plan 2012-20* undertaken during 2015 included a thorough consultation process to evaluate the plan and make a decision on future national management arrangements.

The need for a different approach

6

The review identified that there was a groundswell of support for JD to be dealt with differently from the way in which it has been over the past 12 years. There was general support for JD to be addressed under a common biosecurity approach for endemic diseases, with less emphasis placed on an individual disease. It was not appropriate for the existing strategic plan to continue in its current state. Through an extensive consultative process a revised plan has been developed for implementation in early 2016. This has been a collaborative effort of industry and governments.

Developing the new approach: Participation

7

The plan has been prepared by the Australian cattle industries (Australian Dairy Farmers, Australian Live Exporters' Council, Australian Lot Feeders' Association, the Australian Registered Cattle Breeders' Association and Cattle Council of Australia) in conjunction with the Australian Veterinary Association, Meat & Livestock Australia, Dairy Australia and the Australian, State & Territory Governments after extensive consultation with Australian cattle producers and interested stakeholders.

Fundamental objectives

8

The objectives of the recast Management Strategy for JD in cattle are to:

- Manage and reduce the impact of clinical Johne's disease; and
- Provide tools to allow individual producers to manage the spread of *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* infection in accordance with their business requirements

Principles of Strategy

9

The principles of the new approach is to incorporate the management of JD in an overall biosecurity framework for endemic cattle diseases (the proposed *Management Plan for Cattle Production Conditions 2016-21*) are to:

- **Focus** more attention on biosecurity and less on individual diseases in matters of farm management
- **Improve** the biosecurity credentials of Australia's cattle industry

- **Provide** tools and information to reduce the prevalence of economically important production diseases and improve the management of these diseases where they occur
- **Establish** a biosecure environment within which producers may trade livestock with minimal risk if they so wish
- **Implement** improvements in diagnostic tests and management practices that will provide economic benefit to producers having to manage these diseases as they become available
- **Obtain** as great a level of consistency as possible between States and Territories in managing endemic production diseases
- **Facilitate** business and trade, whether it be local, national or international
- **Lower** costs and lessen the regulatory burden associated with endemic production diseases.

Biosecurity as the wider reference

10

JD is only one of the many diseases that producers must guard against and in managing their business. Biosecurity is concerned with the reduction and management of the risk of diseases, among them JD. Better biosecurity awareness and practices provide a safer environment for producers to operate. For that reason, they are at the centre of this approach.

Primary focus of the new approach

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The new approach takes the business interests of producers as its cornerstone. It places in their hands the assessment and the management of opportunities and risks associated with the pursuit of these interests.

The new approach reflects a shift in thinking

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In that respect, the new approach introduces a substantial shift in thinking: it requires some State (or Territory) involvement that assists producers to manage endemic diseases such as BJD (e.g. cattle health statements and notifiability). It recognises the role of the producer as the interested and empowered decision-maker.

Extensive education and communication effort

13

It is accepted by industry and State and Territory governments that the successful introduction of this approach will require a substantial education and communication effort to assist producers (and interested stakeholders) in understanding the new model, its operation and its effects.

Funding

14

Under the plan, it is intended funding will be sought for:¹

- **Extension and communication activities** that will provide producers with information about biosecurity and the management of endemic diseases of which JD in cattle is just one. This needs to be focused on adoption rather than simply raising awareness
- Further development and refinement of existing **risk assessment tools**, such as the National Cattle Health Statement (CHS), regional biosecurity programs, One Biosecurity, and other existing risk management programs² to assist producers in making informed decisions when moving or trading cattle
- Developing an effective system for monitoring individual herd endemic disease **management programs**, and for use as an assurance tool in low-risk herds. Abattoir monitoring for endemic diseases, certification procedures and a feedback system are important examples
- Ongoing **research and development** to help producers minimise the impact of endemic diseases on their businesses, specifically in the areas of diagnostics, management practices and vaccination.

New approach will replace existing SDR&Gs

15

Once finalised, the approach described in this paper will supersede the current BJD Standard Definitions, Rules and Guidelines (the SDR&Gs) published by Animal Health Australia on behalf of the Australian Animal Health Committee.

Current SDR&Gs apply until formally set aside

16

Until such time as the new approach has been finalised, the present approach (as set out in the existing BJD SDR&Gs) will continue to apply³.

¹ It must be noted that the use and implementation of biosecurity tools, verification systems and vaccination by the producer will not be financially supported by the Management Plan for Cattle Production Conditions.

² For example, a re-scoped market assurance program

³ The decision to set aside the SDR&Gs lies with the Animal Health Committee.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE NEW APPROACH: THE PROPERTY, ITS PIC AND THE END OF ZONES

The property is at the heart of the new approach

17

The property (and its identification code or 'PIC') is the unit of interest at the heart of the new approach – and the point of reference in all matters of assurance and certification.

The concepts of zones and surveillance will be set aside

18

The original concept of zones ('free', 'protected', etc.) relied on surveillance to support the low-risk claims associated with free and protected zones. As cost-effective surveillance for JD in cattle cannot be achieved, it follows that the use of zones will not be supported in the future. Zones will not be part of the new approach.

The property as the true focus of risk and opportunity management

19

In making properties rather than zones or areas the point of reference, the new approach:

- **Relocates** risk at the point at which it can be effectively managed
- **Aligns** the logic of the system to the point of reference in any commercial transaction
- **Transfers** the responsibility for managing the risk of JD (and other diseases) from government agencies to individual producers.

Shared status between neighbouring properties does not constitute a zone or area

20

Nothing in the new approach prevents producers whose properties and herds enjoy a similar risk profile to combine in promotion for commercial advantage. Similarly, producers may act collectively to manage their risk.

Freedom to trade

21

The new approach imposes no regulated transactional or movement restrictions on producers: under the new regime producers may trade with any producer they wish, irrespective of location, provided the buyer believes the cattle to be suitable and they comply with the movement requirements of the state/territory the cattle are moving to⁴. It is the responsibility of the seller to provide the herd-health information sought by the buyer, whose interests are protected by Common Law.

⁴ These movement requirements may be for diseases other than JD.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE NEW APPROACH: RISK ASSESSMENT, RISK MANAGEMENT AND INFORMED, PRODUCER-LED DECISION-MAKING

Industry and trade requirements are the determining references

22

The new approach recognises the different requirements of the dairy and beef cattle industries. It also recognises that each industry or market defines and sets its own quality standards, conditions and limitations, to which producers are held.

Risk and opportunity management in the hands of the producers

23

Within (a) the constraints that industry standards and requirements impose and (b) the particular market or industry that producers choose to serve, producers are empowered to make commercial decisions about the risks and opportunities associated with the cattle that they are thinking of purchasing or selling.

Informed decision-making and risk management

24

Risk is best managed through informed decision-making. Informed decision-making requires tools to be available, through which producers can better assess the health status and risk profile of cattle that they are considering for purchase or sale.

A variety of risk management and decision-support tools

25

The new approach calls for the development of easily-accessible, simple-to-use and (where appropriate) Web-based tools that will assist producers in buying or selling cattle based on the biosecurity risks involved. The tools will be industry-developed and industry-driven, to ensure that they are sensitive to – and reflect – the requirements of specific industries and markets. Examples of tools include: risk assessment tools, cattle health statements, vaccines and regional biosecurity plans.

Forming views on key considerations

26

Broadly speaking, the tools will help producers ask the questions that will assist them in forming a view about:

- **The level of biosecurity assurance** and practice associated with the management of the source property and herd and its match with that of the destination property.
- **The specific health status of the cattle** on offer and of the herd from which they are drawn.
- **The management and biosecurity practices** that can be implemented to improve JD management within their herds

Reduction of risk and informed decision-making

27

The aim of the tools is to help the producer develop as informed a view as possible – and thus as informed a purchasing decision as possible – about the health status of cattle offered for trade. This would include information about JD among other diseases.

Three key types of tools

28

The risk-assessment and decision-support tool kit will feature three key instruments:

- **A list of ‘top tips’**, effectively a buyer’s checklist for the purchase of cattle
- **A risk profiling tool**, designed to estimate a herd’s risk based on various on-farm biosecurity practices and testing history
- **Cattle health declarations (CHD)**, focussed on specific treatments given to the cattle being consigned or the risk level of the herd from which the cattle come.

Upgraded Cattle Health Statements

29

The existing National Cattle Health Statement will be substantially enhanced.^{5 6} Any declaration on an animal health declaration is underpinned by consumer law. In particular, the next generation of cattle health statements will:

- **Be simplified** to take away some of the present complexity (e.g. by using ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers to straightforward questions)
- **Comprise** a set of general questions applicable to all transactions
- **Include** information about JD *as well as* other diseases
- **Be made** readily accessible via electronic format
- **Include** regulatory support to prevent the provision of misleading information

Freedom to design and use further tools

30

Groups of producers active in the same industry and markets whose properties and herds enjoy a similar health status are at liberty to add to these generally available tools if they see benefit in providing additional guidance and protection for their type of business.

Property and regional biosecurity plans (‘RBPs’)

31

Producers will be encouraged to develop property plans, property cluster plans and/or regional biosecurity plans (‘RBPs’) – or be involved in biosecurity-focused verification systems. These plans

⁵ Attention will have to be paid to the role of agents under the new approach, particularly with regard to the transaction-related supply and management of information and cattle health declarations in particular.

⁶ National Vendor Declarations (‘NVDs’) may be linked to the enhanced cattle health declarations at this stage.

will outline how groups of producers will be able to detect, control and manage endemic diseases with the aim of minimising the spread of endemic conditions.⁷

Improved risk assessment instrument will replace the current CattleMAP

32

The current Market Assurance Program ('MAP') for cattle (CattleMAP) will be reviewed and alternative assurance tools will be reviewed/developed that make participation worthwhile and:

- **Serve** as positive marketing tools
- **Support** the introduction of the new approach to dealing with JD in cattle; and generally
- **Add** to the range of assurance tools that industry and producers can readily use in support of informed decision-making and practice improvement.
- Be **owned and operated by industry**.

Current MAP requirements will apply until CattleMAP is formally set aside

33

Until such time as the successor instrument to the present CattleMAP is introduced, requirements associated with the current CattleMAP will remain in force.

⁷ Information about the design and development of regional biosecurity plans will be made available at www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE NEW APPROACH: DEALING WITH JD INFECTION

Presence and Infection of JD

34

The **presence** of JD (Clinical disease) in a herd means that a clinical case of the disease is identified and/or confirmed by definitive testing⁸.

Strain of JD not relevant

35

Infection with Mptb - Distinctions between the infecting strain ('B', 'S' or 'C') are not relevant to the determination of the presence of JD.

Tests and testing for JD

36

Sound information on tests and testing is essential to the guidance and education of producers.

Understanding the nature and limitations of tests and testing

37

In that regard, it is particularly important that the information provided on tests and testing allows users to understand:

- Available tests and their use (and improvements made to them over time)
- The level of risk reduction (and thus the relative certainty) that tests bring
- The limitations of the various tests (i.e. what tests cannot show and thus what cannot be inferred from their use).

Interpreting and understanding the results of JD tests and testing

38

Professional advice should be sought when interpreting test results. Veterinarians have a key role in providing advice to producers on biosecurity risks and recommended management practices including on the application and interpretation of diagnostic tests.

Regulation will not be mandatory for JD in cattle

39

Properties where JD is diagnosed will no longer be required to have quarantine orders applied or regulated movement restrictions.

Quarantine-related compensation will not apply for JD in cattle

40

In the absence of quarantine, compensation for affected producers is not appropriate. It does not form part of the new national approach.

⁸ The tests used for diagnosis may vary.

Commercial impact of JD manifesting on a property will vary

41

The commercial consequences of the presence of JD on a property will vary depending on the requirements of buyers of cattle from that property.

Continuance of trade for a JD affected property

42

Buyers for whom infection of cattle with *M. paratuberculosis* is not a commercial consideration may choose to purchase cattle from JD-affected properties.

Status disclosure

43

Except for dairy cattle being sold for dairy purposes or for cattle being sold direct to slaughter, disclosure of JD status must occur via one of the following mechanisms:

- (a) a trading assurance scheme (LPA or National Dairy Industry BJD Assurance Scheme), OR
- (b) the Cattle Health Statement as mandated by a jurisdictional authority, OR
- (c) any other mechanism using an acceptable risk classification.

All of the above shall be recognised as having equal validity.

Producer driven JD history disclosure

44

Producers that purchase cattle will determine the conditions they purchase under, disclosure by the seller will be driven by requests for information on the cattle/property's JD history. Information provided may be subject to Trade Practice legislation⁹.

Pathways and plans to reduce the risk of JD incidence on an affected property

45

Owners of JD-affected herds will be able, if they choose, to manage and demonstrate the steps taken to reduce the occurrence of JD on the property. The pathway for this will be set out in industry-based assurance programs.

Use of JD risk-reducing pathways and plans is voluntary

46

The use of pathways or plans is voluntary. The development, adoption and implementation of pathways and plans will be undertaken by property owners where they see benefit in showing that they have adopted practices intended to lower the risk of JD in their herds (and/or returning them to a more desirable level of market assurance).

JD risk-reducing pathways to be species and industry specific

47

JD pathways and plans will be species- and industry-specific (e.g. sheep, dairy, beef cattle, etc.) where required but may involve collaborative programs that maximise benefits of all producers.

⁹ In some states it is mandatory for a seller to disclose to a potential purchaser if they know or suspect JD or other diseases may be present. Producers need to check individual state legislation.

Trace-forward and trace-back

48

When JD is found in a herd and while industry protocols and good business practice may encourage trace-forwards and trace-backs, the decision to do so rests with the producer of a JD affected property. Government support/advice for tracing may be available.

Notifiability of JD in cattle

49

JD in cattle remains a notifiable disease. In reaching this position, regard has been had for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and specified trading partner positions in regard to the disease. It is important to note that notification of disease in a herd will not require the relevant government to take any action (other than keep a record of the affected PIC for export certification purposes), but an investigation may be undertaken.

JD notification records

50

Notification of the presence of JD will be supplied to, and held by, the relevant government department (as it is at present). The jurisdiction will use the information to satisfy international export certification requirements.

Life of JD notification records

51

Jurisdictions will continue to keep records of notified cases, as they do currently. The records are kept indefinitely for certification purposes. Notifications will not result in action being taken by the jurisdiction against the PIC owner.

Defining surveillance

52

Surveillance is understood to mean the sum of the collation of JD notifications (as supplied by producers and testing organisations/authorities) and of the results of additional support testing that may be undertaken. By definition and intent, the notion of 'surveillance' is a passive (rather than active or interventionist) one.

In pursuit of quality assurance

53

The new approach recognises that producers may wish to pursue higher quality assurance by introducing, at their expense, additional biosecurity practices and monitoring to verify quality assurance within their herds. Tools for additional monitoring will be described in industry-based assurance documentation currently being prepared.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

A1

The Reference Group provided knowledge, expertise and continuity to the reflection that shaped the future approach to the management of BJD over consecutive months. The following persons took part in the fifth and final meeting of the Group, the proceedings of which are reflected in this paper.

Organisation Represented	Name
Australian Government, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources	Raana Asgar
New South Wales	Ian Roth
Queensland	Allison Crook
South Australia	Roger Paskin
Tasmania	Rod Andrewartha
Victoria	Charles Milne
	Cameron Bell
Western Australia	Michelle Rodan
Australian Dairy Farmers	David Basham (South Australia)
Australian Livestock Exporters' Council	Amy Minahan
Australian Lot Feeders' Association	Bridget Peachey
Australian Registered Cattle Breeders' Association	Alex McDonald
Australian Veterinary Association	David Beggs
Cattle Council of Australia	Justin Toohey
	Chris Wallace-Smith (Victoria)
	Peter Hall (Queensland)
	David Lovelock (Western Australia)
Dairy Australia	Robin Condron
Meat & Livestock Australia	Johann Schröder

APPENDIX B: FINALISING AND INTRODUCING THE NEW APPROACH

B1

Workshop participants agreed a process by which to finalise and introduce the new approach.

B2

The process has six steps and will unfold as follows:

Step	Description
1	Animal Health Australia ('AHA') produces a framework paper setting out the framework of the new approach. ¹⁰
2	AHA releases the paper for public consultation.
3	AHA prepares and issues a second version of the paper, taking into account submissions received through the public consultation process.
4	AHA submits the second version of the paper to the BJD Steering Committee for review, comment and adoption.
5	The BJD-approved paper is forwarded to the Animal Health Committee, so that the AHC can formally relinquish responsibility for the management framework which the new approach supersedes.
6	The new approach comes into effect at the nominated date. ¹¹

¹⁰ Members of the Reference Group will be invited to comment on the paper but will not meet again as a body in order to do so.

¹¹ Promulgation of the new approach must make clear the role of industry programs in the changed framework.

APPENDIX C: DEVISING A SUITABLE RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

C1

Workshop participants offered the following thoughts on desirable (if not essential) attributes of a suitable risk assessment instrument. They argued that it should:

- Draw inspiration from the successful dairy industry score
- Encourage participation
- Ensure that parties transition to the new program without disadvantage
- Rest on (and dovetail with) biosecurity principles and approaches¹²
- Enable the user to ascertain the vaccination status of cattle
- Enable the user to establish the testing history of cattle
- Inform the user about herd management practices.¹³

¹² Account should be taken of the work already performed under the auspices of the LPA (i.e. Livestock Production Assurance) program.

¹³ Particularly relevant will be the use on the property of practices designed to prevent the introduction or transmission of diseases, the monitoring of herd health status, any co-grazing history, and so on.