LIVESTOCK BIOSECURITY NETWORK

Healthy livestock, productive farms, strong communities

JOHNE'S DISEASE IN CATTLE AND J-BAS

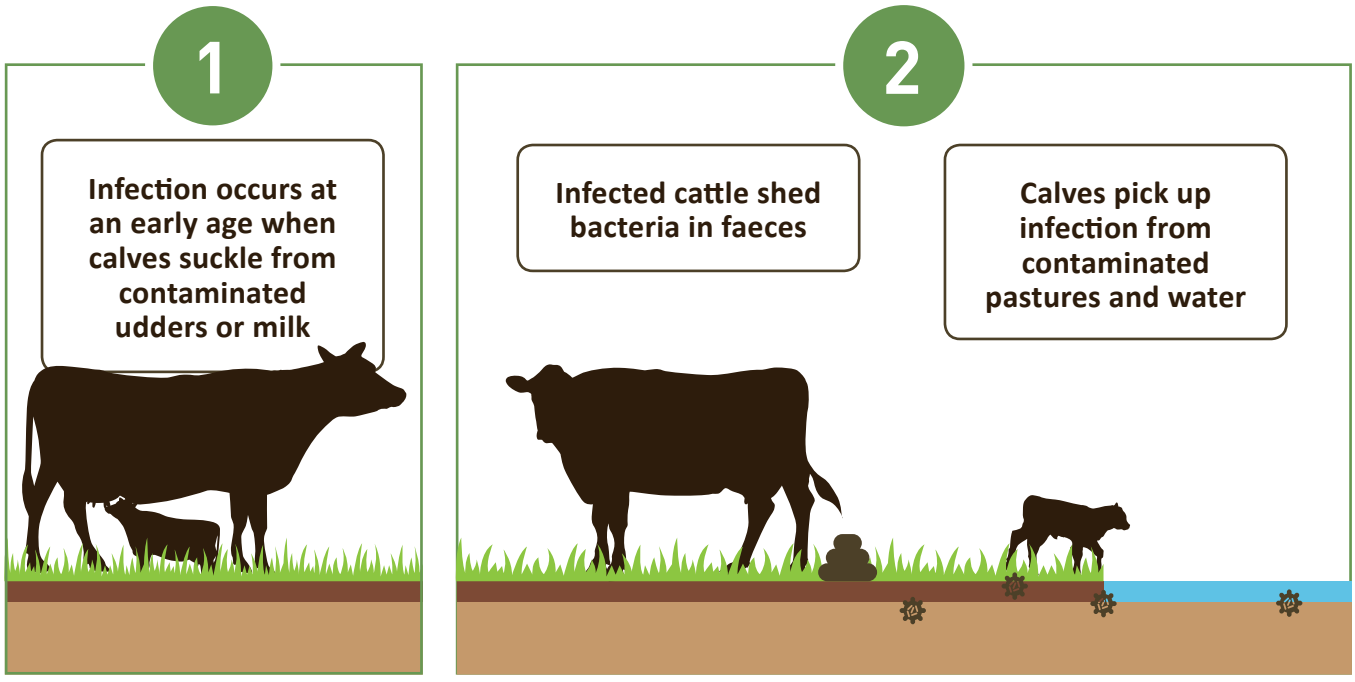
ADVICE FOR EVENT HOLDERS

Event holders should have a written biosecurity plan to manage animal health at their event. This includes endemic as well as exotic diseases. The main aim of an event biosecurity plan is to limit the possibility of transmission of endemic diseases and to describe how the event organiser will manage an animal disease incursion at their event, in the unlikely event that a disease outbreak occurs. This also includes the management of competitors' livestock information. Some states have legal requirements for event holders to keep records of all animals in attendance.

Johne's disease (JD) is just one disease relevant to the livestock industry. The Australian cattle industry has recently made changes to how JD in cattle is managed through deregulation and the implementation of the Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS). The J-BAS is a voluntary risk profiling tool to help manage the risk of JD in beef cattle. It is important that event holders understand JD to manage the risks accordingly. There is also a similar Dairy Assurance Score for dairy cattle.

JD is a serious wasting disease that affects various species of ruminants. In Australia, JD has been found in cattle, sheep, goats, deer and camelids.

HOW JOHNE'S DISEASE CAN BE TRANSMITTED



JD infections are caused by the bacterium, *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, which lives mainly in animal intestines, but can survive in the outside environment for several months. The JD bacteria cause a thickening of the intestinal wall, resulting in a reduction in the normal absorption of food. The infected animal is hungry and eats, but cannot absorb any nutrients. This results in wasting and finally death. Diarrhoea and bottle jaw are also common signs in cattle.

A number of strains of *M. paratuberculosis* have been identified, and it is recognised that they are all capable of infecting a number of ruminant species.

JD is usually transmitted when a young animal ingests infected faeces, for example whilst drinking from an infected and shedding dam. It is not spread through nose to nose contact but can be spread in milk and manure. Therefore having good hygiene in place and excluding infected animals from susceptible animals will minimise the risk of spreading JD.

Event holders that wish to offer assurance of low risk to exhibitors or cattle donators regarding JD can take the following steps:

Advice for Event Holders

General Disease

- Ensure exhibitors submit the required information to event holders. This should include an animal health declaration. Do not allow diseased or unwell animals to an event.
- Offer housing in accordance to species to minimise cross species transmission of disease.
- Have a designated sick bay to house animals that become unwell at an event.
- Display your emergency procedures in the event of an animal health incursion at their event.
- Encourage reporting of sick animals to a designated person during the event.

JD specific

- Event organisers may consider only allowing animals from herds with a minimum J-BAS (and Dairy Assurance Score), or simply request that no known infected herd animals attend the event. A J-BAS 6 or higher gives some confidence that there has been no known clinical cases for 5 years within the herds of attending exhibitors.
- Offer housing in accordance to the J-BAS e.g. keep the J-BAS 6s separate from the J-BAS 7s and 8s.
- Provide information to exhibitors about JD so they understand JD is not readily transmitted, and therefore events are considered a low risk activity for JD.
- For events such as campdrafts, where imposing a minimum score may not be feasible, sourcing cattle that are between one and two years of age can be used as a risk mitigation strategy. Animals under the age of two are a lot less likely to shed the bacteria and therefore J-BAS 0 animals pose little to no risk of infecting other animals at such an event.
- For events that have young animals present (under 12 months), segregation from older animals is important as these animals are the most susceptible.