

AVOIDING JD IN DAIRY HERDS

Johne's disease (JD) in cattle can have a detrimental impact on your dairy business. So, what can you do to prevent your herd from becoming infected?

The best way to prevent JD from entering or spreading through your herd is to develop a farm biosecurity plan¹ which outlines good biosecurity practices such as:

- **Keep calving areas clean.** If cows are managed to calve in paddocks, reduce environmental faecal contamination by strip grazing and fencing off previously grazed areas. When calving in stalls or yards, ensure clean dry bedding is used and faeces are removed regularly.
- **Separate calves from cows regularly.** Generally speaking, the longer a calf is left with an adult cow, the greater the risk of that calf ingesting faeces.
- **Keep calf rearing areas clean and dry.** This includes keeping feed and water sources elevated and clean. It is important to maintain good hygiene practices for all people and other equipment coming into contact with the calves, calf housing areas and their feed/milk. It is also important to ensure that the risk of manure from adult cows contaminating these areas through splashing, run-off or paddocks sprayed with effluent is reduced.
- **Prevent contamination of calf milk.** When feeding calves fresh milk, ensure that milk is from low-risk cows only and is harvested and stored in a way where manure can't get in. Any contaminated milk should be discarded. If low-risk milk can't be obtained, consider using milk replacer or pasteurising milk before feeding.
- **Only use clean water.** Do not use recycled water around calves where possible.
- **Ensure all people, vehicles and equipment in calf areas are clean.** This includes all farm workers and visitors, particularly if they have come from an area near adult cattle. Encourage people to divert around calf areas where possible.
- **Keep other animals away from calves.** Adult cows, goats, sheep, deer and alpacas can be carriers of JD.
- **Purchase cows from low risk sources.** When purchasing new cattle ensure they are from herds with a low JD risk and good biosecurity practices, ideally a JD Dairy Score (JDDS) of 7 or 8.
- **Test regularly and cull when necessary.** Pooled faecal samples should be sent for testing every 1-2 years or more regularly for suspect animals. If any animals test positive for JD, the relevant state/territory Department of Agriculture/Primary Industries should be notified and the animals promptly culled.
- **Consult a vet.** It is important to get professional advice if JD is suspected or has been identified in your herd.



¹ <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/planner/>
<https://biosecurity.dairyaustralia.com.au/login>