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Accreditation for Disease-free Status

Several institutions offer accreditation of freedom from several infectious diseases – BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis and Johne's. They are all based on **CHeCS – Cattle Health Certification Standards**, national rules which allow cattle to be called "accredited free of...".

Our practice is working with Herdcare, run by Biobest Laboratories, and we would like to give a quick outline what accreditation involves and the costs. More detailed information as well as a list of accredited farms can be found on www.biobest.co.uk/herdcare/

Four diseases are currently covered by CHeCs rules:

BVD

IBR

Leptospirosis

Johne's disease

You can become accredited for one, several or all these diseases. Different diseases require different testing regimes as outlined below.

Blood testing can often be linked with TB testing to minimise vet and staff time and handling stress.

Some general rules apply:

Biosecurity: 3 m minimum distance to neighbouring stock, isolation and testing of bought in stock, animals going to shows are treated as brought in stock when returning.

Vaccination: generally incompatible with accreditation as disease free. However, for BVD a status of "vaccinating and monitoring" exists (which is a lower status than freedom of disease). For IBR a marker vaccine exists which does not interfere with antibody testing regimes.

Disease free accreditation is not for everybody! If you sell heifers you are likely to get a higher price, so closed pedigree herds with repeatedly negative bulk milk antibody tests and good biosecurity (ideally no neighbouring livestock farms) are the ones who should consider accreditation. If you frequently buy in stock, have neighbouring farms with unknown disease status etc, you are probably better off with a different strategy (e.g. vaccinating breeding stock and monitoring youngstock). In general, **the accredited herd is not only free from disease but also free of antibodies (which means immunity) to these diseases**. Breaches of biosecurity and introduction of a disease like BVD or IBR into a non-immune herd will have more severe consequences than introduction of virus into a herd that is immune (either by "grumbling" infection or vaccination).

If your herd is already free of these diseases, the necessary regular testing regime has the additional benefit that any introduction of disease will be spotted at an earlier stage and emergency measures (identifying infected animals, vaccination etc) can be initiated, hopefully before severe economic loss occurs.

If you are interested, the following will give an outline of what is involved in becoming accredited.

1) BVD:

By far the easiest and cheapest disease to become accredited for, also the economically most important.

To become accredited:

Start with 10 blood samples of each separately managed group of followers of 9-18 months of age. If all negative, repeat this after 12 months, if all negative again, you are accredited. Quarterly bulk milk samples must also be taken.

To maintain accreditation:

Quarterly bulk milk samples and 10 blood samples of 9-18 months old followers.

2) IBR:

Less economically important than BVD but more important for international trade. Can cause respiratory signs, poor fertility and abortions, but can also be present in a herd without clinical signs.

High initial cost (two herd screens), after that it gets cheaper (bulk milk + proportion of followers)

To become accredited:

Every animal in the herd over 12 months of age has to be tested negative twice, 1-12 months apart.

To maintain accreditation:

After these initial two tests an annual screen of a proportion of youngstock (usually about 35) is necessary. Quarterly bulk milk samples have to be taken.

3) Leptospirosis:

Main symptoms are abortion and infertility. Can cause flu type symptoms in humans.

Accreditation works in the same way as for IBR.

4) Johne's disease:

The main symptom is weight loss, milk drop and chronic diarrhoea in adult cows. Subclinical disease can be more important and an underlying cause of infertility, lameness and mastitis. A possible link exists with a human disease (Crohn's disease), therefore, milk buyers are becoming increasingly aware of it.

To become accredited:

All animals over 24 months have to be tested negative twice, 12-24 months apart.

To maintain accreditation:

All animals over 24 months have to be tested annually.

WHERE TO START ?

We recommend to prioritise accreditation for **BVD** as it is by far the most economically important disease and the easiest and cheapest to become accredited for.

More for selling purposes **IBR and Lepto** can be considered, having high initial costs, but moderate annual costs thereafter. All what's required long term is quarterly bulk milk sampling and about 35 youngstock blood samples (10 of them can also be tested for BVD).

Johne's? Annual blood test of all adults is expensive, an alternative to assess the status is to have about 30 middle-aged cows (if possible problem cows) tested with blood samples from the IBR and Lepto Herd tests, or via NMR/CIS using milk samples. The NMR Herdwise scheme which quarterly tests the herd using individual milk samples is also an option which should be considered.

Please discuss your individual requirements with us.