



NBA accreditation for Beef Farmer 2010

Pedigree beef producers lead the way in disease accreditation
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For more than 15 years, many countries across Europe, principally driven by governmental support, have been addressing the major bovine infectious diseases through country-wide disease accreditation and eradication programmes. Johne's, Leptospirosis, BVD and IBR have all been the subjects of these national schemes and have led to areas of Europe declaring 'disease free' status for one or more of these diseases. The drive for this type of programme with full governmental support and financial backing makes delivering disease control and accreditation relatively easy.

In the UK, where we are in the midst of negotiating (or being told!) industry-wide cost sharing responsibilities, governmental financial support for the control of endemic diseases such as BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis and Johne's is unlikely to be forthcoming. However, that should not detract from the importance of controlling these diseases at a herd level, and then if collaboration can be agreed, at a breed or regional level. Many studies have shown that each of these diseases has a significant impact on the health and performance of beef cattle, from reductions in LWG, through to reduced fertility and increased culling. Introduction of these diseases into a naïve herd can cost up to £400 per animal!

To this end, a number of the beef breed societies have made considerable strides to encourage their members to address infectious diseases in their herds. These include the Welsh Blacks, Aberdeen Angus, Limousins and Shorthorn breed societies. In fact, pedigree beef breeders make up the majority of the membership of the UK's accreditation schemes. Currently there are about 7,000 UK cattle producers involved in one scheme or other, and the wider industry is in constant dialogue to ensure these schemes are easily understood, simple to join and deliver real benefits to cattle health.

However, like the diseases themselves, understanding the different schemes that are available and working out whether your herd would benefit from joining, whether you're a pedigree breeder or commercial farmer, is often confusing. This article aims to provide some clarity.

Most cattle accreditation schemes are governed by, or affiliated to Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS). This is a self-regulatory body for cattle health schemes in the UK. It is a non-trading organisation established by the British cattle industry for the control and eradication of non-statutory diseases by a set of standards to which all licensed cattle health schemes must adhere.

These standards ensure that herd health status in one scheme is equivalent to that of all other schemes in the UK. Close collaboration by CHeCS with other countries ensures that the UK licensed cattle health schemes are as good as any in the world. CHeCS is owned by a number of organisations, including the National Cattle Association (Dairy), National Beef Association, British Cattle Veterinary

Association and Holstein UK, and receives technical support from Scottish Agricultural Colleges, BioBest Laboratories, State Veterinary Service, Veterinary Laboratories Agency, DairyCO, Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers, Central Association of Auctioneers and Valuers and the Livestock Auctioneers Association.

Individual organisations and laboratories have developed schemes that are licensed to CheCS. These organisations and labs provide all the necessary requirements for assisting the beef farmer and their vet to investigate the presence or absence of these diseases in their herd, provide the laboratory testing necessary and detail the animals that need testing. They may recommend further testing, usually through blood sampling, changes in management and even culling of persistently infected animals, before they finally award the accreditation. This categorisation can be “Vaccinated Monitored Free” or “Accredited Free” demonstrating the herd has accordingly reached the required disease status.

The schemes available through CHECS can be found in table 1. These schemes all subscribe to the recommendations of the CHECS technical committee, and farmer members can be assured that the science behind disease control is rigorous and up to date.

Table 1

Cattle Health Schemes licensed by CHECS

Advance Cattle Health Scheme

NationWide Laboratories Leeds

Gate Way Drive, Yeadon

Leeds, LS19 7XY

Tel: + 44 (0) 113 250 7556

Fax: +44 (0) 113 2500198

Email: nwl.leeds@lvlabs.co.uk

www.lvlabs.co.uk

AFBI Cattle Health Scheme

Agri-Food Biosciences Division Veterinary Sciences Division

Stoney Road, Stormont

Belfast, BT4 3SD

Tel: + 44 (0) 2890 525749

Fax: + 44 (0) 2890 525787

Email: info@afbini.gov.uk

www.afbini.gov.uk

Biobest Herdcare

Biobest Laboratories Limited
6 Charles Darwin House
The Edinburgh Technopole
Milton Bridge
Nr Penicuik, EH26 0PY
Tel. +44 (0)131 440 2628
Fax. +44 (0)131 440 9587
E-mail: herdcare@biobest.co.uk

www.biobest.co.uk

Hi Health

Unit 5, Orkney Auction Mart
Kirkwall
Orkney, KW15 1FL
Tel: + 44 (0) 1856 878293
E-mail: hihealth.admin@btconnect.com

www.hi-health.co.uk

NML Herdwise

National Milk Laboratories,
Woodthorne, Wergs Road
Wolverhampton WV6 8TQ
Tel: +44 (0) 1902 749920
Fax: +44 (0) 1902 749938
E-mail: milk@nationalmilklabs.co.uk

www.nationalmilklaboratories.co.uk

Premium Cattle Health Scheme

SAC Veterinary Services
Greycrook, St Boswells
Roxburghshire TD6 0EU
Tel: + 44 (0) 1835 822456
Fax: + 44 (0) 1835 823643
E-mail: pchs1@btconnect.com

www.cattlehealth.co.uk

Shetland Animal Health Scheme

Environmental Health
Grantfield, North Road
Lerwick, Shetland, ZE1 0NT
Tel: +44 (0)1595 744841
E-mail: Hilary.liebeschuetz@shetland.gov.uk
E-mail: Jamie.leslie@shetland.gov.uk

There is a small annual membership fee for each of these schemes (usually about £60) and obviously Shetland Animal Health Scheme and Hi Health are specific regional schemes. NML's Herdwise scheme is focused on Johne's control, principally in dairy herds. The Scottish Cattle Health Declaration approach uses schemes which are CHeCS accredited, and many sales north of the border are now adopting this approach.

If you are considering joining a CHeCS scheme it is worth speaking to your vet before you do, as he or she may have a better relationship with one scheme provider.

One scheme affiliated with CHeCS is Livestock Assurance South East Region (LASER). It was launched at Smithfield AgriLive last December and is a web-based scheme that is free to all cattle producers and keepers in the South East region, and was been developed by vets, farmers, auctioneers and animal health experts in the region.

LASER allows vets to assess the status of five cattle diseases in a herd and award a platinum, gold, silver or bronze standard based on their knowledge of the herd, vaccines used and test results from CHeCS accredited labs. The five diseases are BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis, Johne's and bovine TB.

For BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis and Johne's, the bronze standard shows there have been no steps taken to either detect or control a disease. Herds that achieve the silver standard are taking some steps to controlling a disease through the vaccination of on-farm and bought in stock, or blood and/or milk testing. Gold and platinum levels require the herd to be a member of a CHeCS accredited cattle health scheme. For gold, the herd must have met the requirements of a CHeCS, "Vaccinated Monitored Free programme" or have had one clear test as part of the CHeCS, "Accredited Free Programme". Platinum herds fully meet the requirements of a CHeCS, "Accredited Free Programme". CHeCS providers SAC, Biobest and NWL labs have agreed reductions in their annual fee for a year for farmers joining the LASER scheme.

Since there is no vaccination for bovine TB, standards differ from the other four diseases. The bronze standard includes all statutory requirements associated with TB and stipulates that herds are not under TB2 restrictions. Silver, gold or platinum status relates to the farm's risk of introducing TB into the herd or residual infection being present. To achieve this higher status, extra precautions need to be taken. These include preventing nose-to-nose contact of neighbouring stock, having wildlife-proofed feed bins and meeting strict testing criteria. LASER is affiliated with CHeCS as they use the same scientific standards agreed by the CHeCS technical committee for higher level accreditation. However, LASER also introduces the opportunities for accreditation through vaccination, and includes TB, making the scheme increasingly relevant to commercial and pedigree breeders. Members of the scheme can print off a real-time herd report from the secure website, detailing their herd status to potential purchasers.

There are two other recently launched schemes, not registered with CHeCS yet still providing herd health assurances. MyHealthyherd, also a web based programme, uses a detailed risk analysis of your herd, through questions asked of you and your veterinary surgeon to produce a status based on a traffic light system. This programme helps producers to determine the diseases of biggest financial risk to the health of their herd and then, in conjunction with a vet, determine the most appropriate strategy for reducing this risk. Again, members can print off a document from the web based database to demonstrate their herd status and disease risk.

HerdSure is a new scheme launched by the VLA. This scheme is less about accreditation, but more about identifying the current disease status of the herd for BVD, Johne's and Fluke, before recommending the necessary tests to improve and then maintain an improved status. Packages for Leptospirosis, IBR and Neospora are to follow. Working with the lab and your vet, samples are submitted to determine the health of the herd and automatic reminders are generated to ensure the necessary samples are requested.

Whichever step you decided to take to demonstrate the health investment you have made with your herd, speaking to a vet who can help you to decide how to get involved and direct you through the detail of the testing and sampling requirements is an important first step in capitalising on an improved herd health status.