



Digging deeper into the detail when it comes to Johne's disease will help vets and producers develop more effective control plans. We spoke to a vet who has had success with this more targeted approach.

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Vets and producers can now home in on specific management areas to target improvements in Johne's control, with the introduction of a new version of the Interherd+ dairy management program. And George Farm Vets' Gethin Roberts says that it's taking Johne's control to the next level. Each herd is at a different stage in its Johne's control journey and respective control plans will vary. This shows in the 253 Johne's-tested herds surveyed by PAN Livestock as part of the NMR-recorded 500-herd KPI report. The program's value is even more relevant within vet practices, and then at farm level, when vets can delve into individual cows in a more targeted way.

"At our Johne's producer meetings we are able to share herd disease data anonymously, allowing participants to gauge how they are doing compared to herds within the practice and, over time, their own direction of travel," says Mr Roberts. "It's also good to see how well the herds in our practice rank against the national picture after all the hard work our clients and vets put in to try and combat Johne's."

The way the information is presented appeals to Mr Roberts and his colleagues. "It's a complex disease, but

a ranking system for key information makes it more tangible and it keeps producers motivated. Figure 1 shows the performance of dairy herds in the George Farm Vets group and the red bars show their position among the national sample.

"It's encouraging to see the progress that has been made with Johne's average test values," says Mr Roberts. "This is the average Johne's antibody level for cows in each herd, based on the routine NMR HerdWise milk screening service. More than 70% of our herds were within NMR's top 25% at the end of 2022."

Delve deep

"And, more importantly, benchmarking helped us to identify that 6% of our milk-recorded herds are within the bottom quartile. This provides an opportunity to engage and work more closely with these units," he adds.

The real benefit is being able to delve deep into each herd's key Johne's parameters to find out where the problems are.

"We're able to identify where herds rank for each key Johne's parameter and this is when it starts getting really interesting."

Mr Roberts finds the Progress Tracker, provided for each herd using the NMR HerdWise Johne's screening service and reported through Herd Companion, extremely beneficial.

"It highlights the effect of the current control measures on the various Johne's parameters, the progress that has been made, and it identifies areas for improvement," he says.



Gethin Roberts:
**"Progress Tracker
 identifies areas for
 improvement"**

"In herds with higher infection rates a key area to focus on is the percentage of J4 cows and the percentage of J4s in parity one. This shows how the disease is progressing. If there's a high percentage of J4s in parity one, we know the herd is not effectively blocking transmission and that young animals are becoming infected with high doses of the Johne's bacteria MAP," he says.

"In this scenario, we review the control plan that is in place to see where the pinch points are. It may be that the herd is keeping hold of infected cows for too long and they are being bred, or that the unit is struggling with segregation at calving."

Blocking transmission

If controls are working, and the herd is blocking transmission, the proportion of J4s among younger animals should be going down.

"If we look at culling and serving parameters on the Progress Tracker, we can see how the disease is being managed, and the compliance with these control measures. We know that when results come back, we must act on them and keep the lists of cows to be managed for Johne's right up to date," adds Mr Roberts. Another area vets are focusing on, particularly in the medium- to lower-prevalence herds, is progeny from cows that become Johne's positive.

Cows can turn Johne's positive as they get older as they could have been harbouring infection since they were calves. If they already have progeny in the herd, particularly heifer calves on the ground, these animals may also be infected.

"So we're homing in on the Johne's report on InterHerd+ that flags up progeny of infected cows and treating these as a risk to limit any transmission."

Infection rates very much determine the control plans and approach to culling and breeding.

"The inclusion of the priority culls on the HerdWise report helps to identify cows that are likely to be the most infectious. These are animals with two test results above 60 or one test result above 100," says Mr Roberts, adding that it is particularly important that these cows

are managed under strict guidelines to avoid them passing on infection, particularly to younger calves. And he recommends that priority culls should be leaving the herd as soon as possible and at least within three months. "In addition, any test positive animal – including all those ranked J2 to J5 on the NMR Johne's HerdWise report – must be treated in the same way and managed as a risk."

"Herds with low infection rates can be more ruthless in their breeding and culling policies, providing they are not having to cull for other reasons and have enough replacements, compared to those with high infection rates where they can't afford to lose too many cows." He urges all dairy staff to stay up to date with Johne's cow status and be aware of any changes. "New staff need to know the protocols too. One small mistake can undo a lot of good work."

"Everyone has to stay up to date and live in the moment to tackle Johne's disease effectively. InterHerd+ rankings and in-depth reporting is bringing the data to life on units, and I think it will pave the way to real progress in controlling Johne's for those involved," adds Mr Roberts. |

Management tool improves disease control

- Johne's control is a long journey – there's no quick fix. There are many factors affecting Johne's prevalence
- Once disease prevalence is low, making further gains needs in-depth investigation to find the pinch points
- InterHerd+ now offers in-depth detail on all 36 NMR-recorded parameters analysed in the PAN Livestock 500-herd report updated annually
- Tracking Johne's through InterHerd+ identifies break points
- More than 100 vet practices take advantage of the InterHerd+ analysis to add value
- It ranks the practice's dairy herds against a national NMR herd sample, and individual herds against cohorts

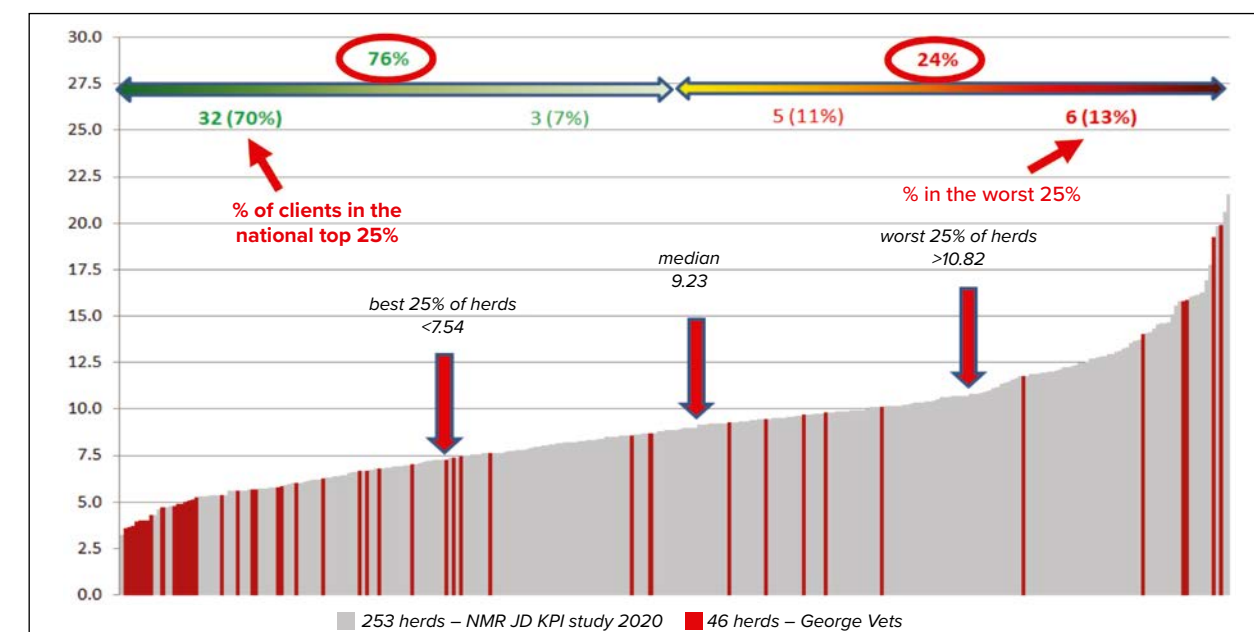


Figure 1: Average test values – NMR national herd sample (2020) versus George Farm Vets dairy herds (2022)