

Johne's Accreditation Schemes Do Work

The following is an article prepared by Bruce Lawson, a veterinary adviser to the Welsh Black Cattle Society. It clearly shows that Johne's accreditation schemes do work long term which is becoming increasingly important as more heifer replacements are being sourced from the suckler herd itself.

Welsh Black Sales

The Welsh Black Cattle Society initiated a Johne's disease control scheme in the year 2000. This is run as a Breed Society scheme. Participating breeders are required to join the Premium Cattle Health Scheme and test according to scheme rules. Membership has increased steadily since the inception of the scheme and continues to do so.

The following figures indicate the progress of the scheme.

81% of all cattle entered in the three Breed Society pedigree sales at Dolgellau (North Wales) in 2007 were accredited monitored free of Johne's disease and a further 6% had achieved a clear herd test within the previous 12 months, making a total of 87% which were either accredited or had a recent clear herd test. In the two Llandovery (South Wales) sales the figures are slightly lower – 49% accredited and 26% with a recent clear herd test, making a total of 75%. This disparity is because in the South awareness of the disease was initially poorer and therefore uptake of the scheme was slower than in the North, but this gap is closing quickly. We expect the figures for 2008 to be better again.

The fact that at Breed Society sales a large proportion of cattle are now being put forward for breeders to purchase which carry minimal risk of being infected with Johne's disease is a measure of the success of the scheme.

The Welsh Blacks are Wales' only native breed of cattle. They make a top quality suckler cow possessing many desirable traits for modern beef production including hardiness, longevity, fertility, mothering ability and docility.

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