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28<sup>th</sup> November 2012

Dear Sir,

#### UPDATE TO THE CHeCS JOHNE'S PROGRAMME

I write to update readers to a major change to the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) Technical Document concerning the Johnes Disease programme.

Following extensive discussions with pedigree cattle breeders and their breed societies and with the ten CHeCS registered cattle health schemes, a new programme will be officially launched on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013.

This new graded system will enable herds to maintain or move towards clear herd tests. This is achieved by a combination of testing and the implementation of a management programme with an up to date health plan properly endorsed by both the farmer and his veterinary surgeon.

A simple comparison between the old CHeCs standard and the new risk based approach is set out below. Full details can be found on the CHeCS website [www.checs.co.uk](http://www.checs.co.uk)

Risk Level	Old System		Additional Information
1	Accredited	3 clear herd tests at annual intervals	Number of years accredited
2	Qualifying	1 or more clear consecutive herd tests	Number of clear tests
3	Control	Evidence of infection but no more than 3% reactors identified at annual herd test	Must have disease reduction programme in place
4	Control	As level 3 but with more than 3% of the animals tested show evidence of infection	Must have disease reduction programme in place
5	None	No testing or Health plan.	Herds that present the highest risk when buying stock

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Johnes Disease control is challenging and some cattle breeders have become disillusioned by the previous approach. The use of terminology such as “accredited” implied freedom from the disease, when in fact it was impossible to make this guarantee and buyers could be lulled into a sense of false security. In the current system, herds could have accredited free status for a number of years and when a positive animal was identified the herd immediately lost its status and returned to being monitored. This was no better in terms of status than a herd which had been testing for a number of years, regularly had positives but was doing nothing to improve their status.

CHeCS believe this new Risk based approach addresses these issues. It should also assist farmers when buying stock. Cattle from a herd with Risk level 1 are least likely to have Johnes disease compared to a herd at Risk level 5.

Yours faithfully,  
For and on behalf of  
Cattle Health Certification Standards

Tim Brigstocke  
Executive Director