

VETLINE NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025

Kia ora,

Welcome to the spring issue of Vetline, this is LIC's seasonal update designed specifically for veterinary professionals. Our Diagnostics team are passionate about bringing you relevant information that supports your vital role in herd health and productivity on farm.

At the heart of every herd improvement story lies one undeniable truth: healthy cows are productive cows. When free from disease and stress, cows produce more, breed better, and fulfil their genetic potential within the herd. We want to make sure we are always working with vets to deliver the best outcomes for farmers.

This edition we look at **Johne's Disease management** during mating as well as information on our latest **mastitis product**. Insights are also shared from our genetics and herd testing teams.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in helping lift the health and productivity of New Zealand herds.

Katherine McNamara

Animal Health Product Manager, LIC



Bulk milk BVD Antibody ELISA test recalibration

Katherine McNamara Animal Health product Manager & Shona Pryor Animal Health Manager

Last season we transitioned to a new batch of Antibody ELISA kits for BVD Bulk Milk monitoring, which produced slightly higher (S/P) results for some herds that were historically in the high or very high exposure category.

This season we've worked closely with our kit supplier to implement a recalibrated version of the test, to be more in line with historic results.

Due to this test recalibration, some herds may appear to have a slightly lower exposure result compared to last season, particularly those herds that tend to have exposure levels in the High or Very High categories.

Extensive validation is carried out each year for all of our kit batches. This validation work has shown that the test behaves as it should when identifying herds with exposure to BVD.

If you'd like more information on the test kit recalibration please email: testyourcows@lic.co.nz or call 0800 436 362 if you have any questions.

Johne's checkpoint: supporting farmers to manage their herd's risk during mating season

Kara Dawson BVSc MVS, Scientist (Epidemiology), Livestock Improvement Corporation

As we all know, mating decisions play an important role in long-term Johne's disease control. When helping farmers to make strategic choices that reduce the risk of infected replacements entering the herd here are some key things to keep in mind:

- Avoid breeding replacements from high-risk cows (those that have tested positive or high positive and have been retained, have shown clinical signs, or tested 'suspect' multiple times).
- Where possible, exclude daughters of clinical or high-positive cows. These animals are best mated to terminal beef sires or culled, to limit the spread of risk to the next generation of replacements.
- Prioritise sexed semen for low risk cows, focusing genetic investment on animals with the best health and performance potential.
- And remember early, informed mating choices help reduce future disease pressure and support sustainable herd improvement.

We would appreciate it if you would support farmers to start thinking about booking in Johne's testing. The lab gets very busy between January and March, so please encourage your farmers to book early to ensure they get a spot. Testing earlier in the season may provide more information going into culling decisions in the

event of a drought and additional test pre-mating, can allow better breeding decisions and reduce the risk of infected replacements.

A reminder about TB testing and Johne's bookings

When booking Johne's testing, check with the farmer that the herd is not due for a TB test. LIC's policy aligns with UK recommendations to leave a gap of at least 43 days for milk testing, and 71 days for blood testing, after tuberculin inject before collection of samples for Johne's ELISA3. This helps to avoid the possibility of cross-reactivity.

For more helpful information on Johne's management, refer to DairyNZ's Johne's Disease Management Guide or reach out to LIC's Animal Health Advisors on 0800 (0800 436 362) testyourcows@lic.co.nz

Protecting Herds from BVD at Mating

As the mating season approaches, we are keen to remind farmers how they can protect their herds from Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) during this critical time.

As you know, a single incursion can result in significant reproductive losses, poor calf health, and the creation of persistently infected (PI) animals that perpetuate the disease cycle.

Some key reminders to consider when discussing biosecurity with your farming clients are:

1. In: Manage all stock entering the property

Every new arrival is a potential risk. Don't let an infected animal—especially a natural mating bull—compromise the herd.

- Remind farmers to ensure any bulls entering their property have been tested for BVD and have been vaccinated - ask for credentials.
- Test all stock prior to entering the herd, including any animals temporarily joining the herd.

2. Out: Safeguard stock leaving and returning to farm

A farmer's own stock, particularly replacement heifers grazed off-farm, can be "Trojan cows," returning with an unwanted BVD infection.

- Remind farmers to vaccinate before grazing. If sending stock away, ensure they are vaccinated and have protection that covers the critical period of pregnancy

3. Over: Manage farm boundaries

For many farmers, neighbours pose a significant risk of BVD transmission.

- Double Fencing: A secure double boundary fence with a minimum two-metre gap is the gold standard for preventing nose-to-nose contact with neighbouring cattle.
- Avoid grazing paddocks where neighbours' cows are directly over the fence

LIC is committed to partnering with vets to help reduce the impact of BVD on farms.

For support with BVD testing LIC can help provide individual BVD testing for calves on tissue and blood, BVD bulk milk testing, and cost-effective individual BVD testing for milking cows using herd test milk samples.

For more information on BVD testing at LIC [click here](#).

New season prices

Please [click here](#) to access our new season price list.

Animal Health online booking form

We now have an Animal Health online booking form which you can use to order any LIC diagnostic tests for your farmers. This form can be found on the vet resources page on our website - please [click here](#) to view.

New Mastitis Multiplex test

We are now offering a new test to help farmers better detect mastitis in their herds.

The Mastitis Multiplex test provides more information and accuracy at a lower cost and will replace LIC's existing Staph. aureus PCR test.

By utilising DNA detection methodology (PCR), the Mastitis Multiplex uses herd test milk samples to detect the three most common mastitis causing bacteria: Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus uberis, and Streptococcus dysgalactiae, as well as detecting the blaZ gene. This provides a convenient way to identify animals with subclinical mastitis, as well as identifying potential antibiotic-resistant mastitis bacteria within the herd.

Mastitis Multiplex PCR of herd test milk samples was compared with bacteriological culture of aseptic quarter milk samples from the same cow to determine Mastitis Multiplex test performance using herd test milk. The trial included 286 cows across eleven farms throughout the North Island of New Zealand. All four targets showed high levels of sensitivity and specificity using herd test milk:

Mastitis Multiplex		
Target	Sensitivity	Specificity
<i>Staph. aureus</i>	94%	99%
<i>Strep. uberis</i>	89%	94%
<i>Strep. dysgalactiae</i>	85%	99%
<i>blaZ</i>	92%	92%

Bookings for this test are open now and must be done via a vet clinic.

For more information on this test, visit our vet resources page on our website or contact our Animal Health team on 0800 436 362.

Please [click here](#) to view webinar.



Herd Testing Standards update

In collaboration with DairyNZ and CRV, LIC has recently completed a comprehensive review of the Herd Testing Standard. As a result, several updates have been introduced and will be phased in over a three-year transition period.

The first of these changes is an increase in the calving threshold percentage from 75% to 85%. This new requirement was implemented by both Certified Herd Testers (LIC and CRV) in June 2025. The change is designed to improve the accuracy and quality of production data used in animal evaluation. It supports broader industry efforts to accelerate genetic gain, boost profitability, and enhance environmental outcomes.

Recent data indicates that approximately 5% more herd tests will now be considered non-compliant. To ensure results are available in MINDA for farmers and veterinarians, calving dates must be recorded within 150 days of the herd test.

To avoid delays in result processing, please encourage farmers to promote the timely and accurate recording of calving data.

Beef sires over dairy: Calving difficulty

Paul Charteris - LIC Product Manager
for Dairy Beef and SGL

We're continuing to see strong growth in the number of beef straws used over dairy cows each year. With this growth, it's increasingly important that dairy farmers record calving assistance in MINDA® whenever possible. Every record counts, whether it's a straightforward calving or one that required intervention, because more comprehensive data leads to more accurate sire selection.

Currently, calving difficulty records in MINDA for beef sires used over dairy cows are limited. While this trait has a low heritability and is more strongly influenced by cow condition, nutrition and parity, the sire still has an effect. Capturing more records helps us better identify sires that combine calving ease with other desirable traits like growth, carcass and meat quality.

How does better data support the selection of beef sires for calving ease?

Firstly, the Dairy Beef Progeny Test (DBPT), managed by Beef + Lamb Genetics New Zealand is a widescale trial that evaluates beef sires for a range of performance traits in their dairy beef progeny when mated over New Zealand dairy cows. LIC has selected several sires for our annual catalogue that are graduates from this programme, and they have proven to be reliable performers.

Second, the past couple of years has seen a quiet revolution in several beef cattle stud breeding programmes with investment in genomics, increasing intensity of recording and selection of sires for EBVs that balance the seemingly impossible (due to negative genetic correlations) of outstanding calving ease, combined with growth, carcass and meat quality. These unproven, yet highly selected sires, with excellent figures can prove to be a successful strategy of getting the best dairy beef genetics into the market.

Breeder recommendations, breed, within-breed EBVs, progeny test results and MINDA results are all considered when selecting beef sires for our catalogue each year.

Bull breed also has an impact. Our co-op selects superior sires from breeds known for improved calving ease and low birthweights. Each calving season, we will monitor nationwide beef calving difficulty on twice-weekly basis in our herd improvement platform, MINDA.



How can you support?

- Encourage dairy farmers to record calving assistance in MINDA whenever possible. A record of no calving difficulty is just as important as a recorded calving difficulty. More comprehensive data means more accurate selection.
- Keep up to date with [Beef + Lamb NZ Dairy Beef Progeny Test](#)
- Explore the latest [Dairy Beef](#) resources