Gateway Gazette

Dairy Newsletter.

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Summer 2023/2024

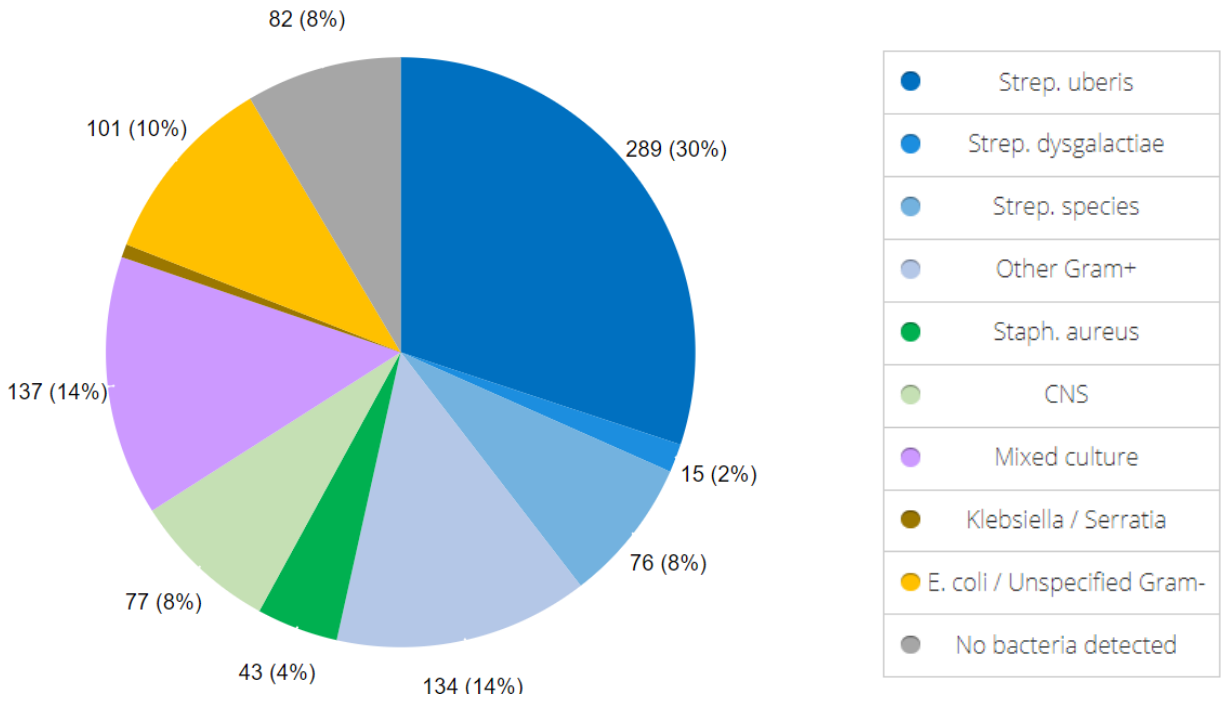
We hope you're all faring well and getting through the busy mating period. So far, it's been a relatively slow start to summer, and we hope for a boost in growth before things start to dry out. At Gateway Vets, we are very sorry to say goodbye to our clinic Irishman, Charles Burgess. It's been so good having you as part of the team, and you'll be missed! We wish you all the best for the future, as Ireland and more adventures loom. – Nina

1000 Mastatest Samples

Gateway clients began using Mastatest lapboxes to test milk samples on farm in 2019. Since then, use has been increasing each year and we are almost at 1000 clinical mastitis samples tested. On farm Mastatest allows rapid identification of mastitis cases not requiring antibiotic treatment.

The pie chart below gives a breakdown of the bugs causing mastitis on Gateway Mastatest farms since 2019. **Strep uberis** (blue) is by far the most common bug isolated, at 30% of cases. This is higher than the 24% diagnosed by Mastatest nationwide.

Interestingly **E. coli** (yellow) and no growth (grey) cases together make up 18%. These do not require antibiotics and will receive nil milk withhold anti-inflammatories only. So far this has saved on unnecessary antibiotic use and discarded milk in 183 mastitis cases.



If you would like your own Mastatest lapbox in shed please call the clinic to discuss the suitability for your farm. Alternatively, we run a box in clinic for rapid identification and sensitivity testing on clinical samples as well as identification of bugs on high cell count samples.

Cows milked first produce more than cows milked last

This was the finding of a 2019 study on pasture based dairy farms in Tasmania. The first 50 cows through the shed produced on average 18% more milk than the last 50. The herds studied ranged from 450 to 805 cows, milked twice daily.

We know that the order in which cows are milked is consistent, especially for those at the front and back of the herd. Therefore, the first cows consistently access the 'pick' of the pasture allocated as well as spending less time in the collecting yard and more time in the paddock. Whether there would be a benefit from preventing this preferential feeding needs to be examined. It may just close the gap between the first cows out and the last and have no effect on overall herd productivity.

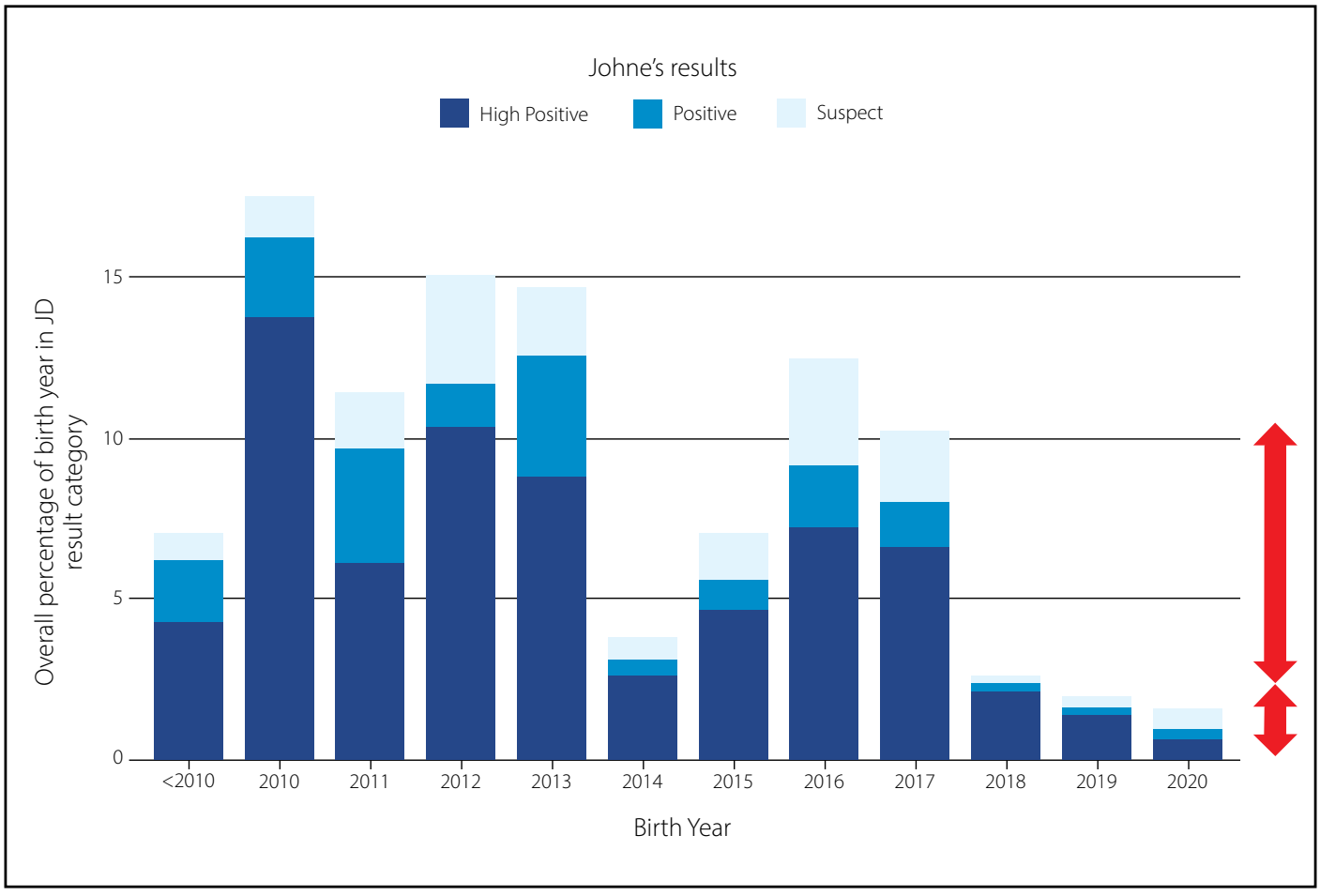
Johnes Disease Dashboard

Johnes disease (JD) is highly prevalent in the NZ dairy herd and incurs significant costs to farmers through lost production, early culling, and death. JD is notoriously tricky to test for and eradicate because animals can contract the disease as calves and remain test negative for years before going positive or showing clinical signs.

LIC offers whole herd testing for JD on samples taken at the herd test. Despite the challenges with testing, the milk test has been shown to be a useful tool to identify JD shedders and to minimise within herd prevalence and associated costs.

LIC are developing a Johnes Disease dashboard which will help identify trends in herds. Each herds data can be compared against the 2600 herds LIC have tested since 2013. This will help us develop strategies for control of JD within our herds. For example, if you have a high % of Johnes positive cows born in 2017 you can decide not to breed replacements from this age group or not to feed their colostrum.

Below is a case study to show how the LIC JD dashboard can be utilised:



The graph shows the percentage of JD positive cows in each birth year cohort. The farmer changed from rearing calves on the dairy platform in 2017 to removing them to a clean runoff with no adult stock present from 2018 onwards. We know that the first month of life is a key time for animals to contract JD. An immediate reduction in the percentage positive is seen from the 2017 to 2018 born cohorts (top arrow).

The prototype is being trialled in the '23/'24 season and will be fully launched over the coming years.

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Managing Parasites in R1s

Gut parasites are the main production limiting disease of calf rearing systems, and until more robust immunity develops at 9 months of age they are highly susceptible to infection and create parasite contaminated paddocks wherever they graze. On properties where calves graze the same paddocks multiple times a season, year after year, the problem is made worse as exposure to parasites will be much higher.

It is widely believed that through regularly drenching, we can effectively control parasites and can forget about the issue. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Where pasture contamination is high, growth rates will be impacted no matter how often you drench. Therefore, managing parasites on your property goes beyond how often you drench and what product you use. Sheep farmers will be well versed in the various tools available to create cleaner pasture for youngstock.

- Follow calves with older cattle or ideally sheep. The longer that paddocks are grazed by another stock class, the better.
- Save hay/silage aftermath and recently reseeded paddocks for calves. These will have low contamination levels.
- Use forage crops for parasite free feed.
- Most parasites live in the bottom third of the pasture. Avoid grazing paddocks hard with calves. This limits their grass intakes and exposes them to far more parasites.

Minimising the number of parasites consumed will help grow thriftier calves that require less drench. This is important as cases of drench resistance in cattle become more common. Previously thought of as a sheep farming problem, anyone managing and drenching young calves now needs to be aware of the main methods of slowing resistance.

- Use oral drenches in calves. They are much more effective than pour-ons and injectables. Injectables are the next best choice.
- Use double combination drenches in calves. These slow resistance development and are more effective against all species of parasites affecting calves.
- Check to make sure your drench has been effective – test dung samples 10-14 days post drench. This works best in calves <6 months old.
- NEVER drench and immediately turn out to clean pasture. This creates paddocks populated by only resistant worms.

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