

# JOHNE'S DISEASE IN CATTLE FAQs

## What is the Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS)?

J-BAS is a risk profiling tool developed for use in the new approach to Johne's disease (JD) in beef cattle. The scoring system is from 0 (being 'Unmanaged risk') to 8 ('High Assurance'). There is also a Dairy Score for dairy cattle with a similar range of scores.

The scores have been developed to allow producers to communicate to buyers of their cattle what JD risk they believe the cattle represent. The voluntary, self-assessed score requires having a biosecurity plan for the property and is based on the history of JD on the property and what testing might have been done. Producers should ask further questions if worried about JD, and not just focus on the score alone. There is a checklist on Animal Health Australia's (AHA) website to help with questions that could be asked.

## Is J-BAS voluntary or mandatory?

J-BAS is a voluntary tool. It has however, been referenced in WA and NT entry requirements, so is necessary for those markets. Under the new JD Framework (of which J-BAS is a part), each producer is responsible for their own JD risk management and is encouraged to consult a vet.

## When did J-BAS commence?

J-BAS was developed for the new national approach to JD management that commenced on 1 July 2016. Initially, all herds were given a transition score based on the zoning system that preceded it. Herds in NSW, Qld, NT and northern SA were given a transition J-BAS of 7, as were herds known as *Beef Only*. All herds in WA were given a transition J-BAS of 8. These transition scores expired on 30 June 2017.

## What changed when the transition scores expired?

From 1 July 2017, producers with J-BAS 7 or 8 could continue nominating these scores for their cattle provided they had an on-farm biosecurity plan in place and committed to having samples from their cattle collected before 30 June 2018 for testing. Without a biosecurity plan and this commitment, herds with a transition score of 7 or 8 became J-BAS 6.

Herds which have had a clinical case of JD within the last five years are not eligible for the default score of 6 and transitioned to a score 0, 2 or 4 depending on the time since the last clinical case.

## If I commit to a test, which one should I choose?

There are three tests available, with only two of these recommended. Preferred tests are the pooled faecal HT-J PCR test and culture tests. The PCR test can produce results within a couple of weeks; the culture test may take three months and is the most accurate. The ELISA (blood) test is the cheapest but least accurate and is excluded as a recognised test for entry into WA and some overseas markets. Sampling should follow laboratory guidelines.

## How do I know what score I should give myself?

The scores are based on the likelihood of a herd's previous exposure to JD and a producer's preparedness in managing risks. The J-BAS table with scores can be found on the '*JD in cattle tools*' page on the AHA website.

## How is J-BAS being enforced?

J-BAS is a voluntary self-declaration. There is no central authority signing off on scores. However buyers, markets and jurisdictions with entry requirements may request a copy of your on-farm biosecurity plan, particularly if you indicate on the Cattle Health Declaration that you have a plan. The existence of an on-farm biosecurity plan is also auditable under Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) requirements.

## Is a register of J-BAS herds being kept?

No. J-BAS is a voluntary self-assessed scheme with the associated biosecurity plan being held by the producer.

## Where do I find a biosecurity plan template?

The *On-farm biosecurity plan template* has been developed to help producers develop a plan and can be found on the AHA website.

Livestock Biosecurity Network (LBN) and LPA have also produced a detailed template that a producer can use.

Australian Cattle Veterinarians have developed a program, BioCheck, to work with their clients on developing a property plan. It's up to the producer to choose which plan to use; those listed above all have a similar outcome.

### Where do I submit my biosecurity plan?

There is no requirement for formal lodging of the plan. It is to be stored somewhere easily accessible so you can refer back to it when required or produce it when requested.

The plan is to assist you in having biosecurity measures in place. The plan is intended to be routinely reviewed so that you can improve your biosecurity practices where required.

### Why do I need a veterinarian for higher scores?

To obtain a J-BAS of 7 or 8, your biosecurity plan must be signed by a veterinarian who has discussed with you any biosecurity issues that are relevant to your operation; you must also have undertaken a 'Check Test' with negative results. A veterinarian is required to collect and dispatch the samples for testing.

### What is a 'Check Test'?

To maintain J-BAS 7 or 8, producers must undertake a Check Test of samples from 50 adult (two years or older) animals within the herd (or, if a herd is less than 50, all eligible animals). This test is done every three years for maintaining a score.

Producers need at least to have had samples collected by a veterinarian and dispatched to the laboratory by 30 June 2018. After that date a Sample Test (of up to 300 animals) will be required to progress a herd to J-BAS 7, and two Sample Tests to J-BAS 8.

### Do I need to use Cattle Health Declaration?

Although not mandatory for J-BAS, a Cattle Health Declaration is for use by producers to convey the animal health information about animals being traded. NT and SA have mandated its use for cattle entering their jurisdictions, while it is recommended that the form should be both supplied by the vendor and requested by the buyer for all cattle sales. You can find the form on the Farm Biosecurity website or in the electronic National Vendor Declaration portal developed by Meat & Livestock Australia.

### What if I'm a mixed livestock producer with cattle, do I have to have a J-BAS?

Having a J-BAS is voluntary; however producers should consider the benefits of a J-BAS as a tool for managing JD risk and apply it according to the needs of their operation. If you choose to have a J-BAS, it would only be for your

cattle. This said, it's important all susceptible species on your property are managed for JD (and other important diseases) because JD can spread from species to species.

### What tools do I have available to manage JD in multiple species of livestock on my property?

For the cattle sector, the JD management Framework is in place. For the sheep industry, the National Ovine JD Management Plan (NOJDMP) exists with tools such as vaccination. Both programs are industry owned and managed, and require producers to be responsible for the health and wellbeing of their own livestock. Each program includes a range of useful tools, such as health declarations.

Cattle are at minimal risk of contracting JD from sheep on the same property if these sheep are covered by a JD vaccination program.

### Can I introduce cattle from a lower J-BAS herd?

Producers may choose to introduce small numbers of animals with a lower score; however this may affect your J-BAS. It's important you are confident that the source herd is low risk and well managed under good biosecurity practices.

Introduced animals should be noted in the biosecurity plan and handled through actions like monitoring them for signs of illness, keeping them separate from vulnerable young cattle on the property and/or testing them (especially if a J-BAS 7 and 8 herd where testing is required). Introductions for J-BAS 7 and 8 herds should be discussed with the veterinary advisor before purchasing the animals. Herds selling cattle to WA will need to check with the WA Department for entry requirements.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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### BIOSECURITY PLANS

[LBN On-farm biosecurity plan template  
www.lbn.org.au/farm-biosecurity-tools/planning-tools](http://www.lbn.org.au/farm-biosecurity-tools/planning-tools)

[AHA On-farm biosecurity template  
www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/plan](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/plan)

### JD IN CATTLE TOOLS

[John's Beef Assurance Score  
www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/jd-cattle-tools](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/jd-cattle-tools)

[John's disease score in dairy cattle  
www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animal-management/Animal-health/Bovine-Johnes-Disease.aspx](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animal-management/Animal-health/Bovine-Johnes-Disease.aspx)

[Cattle Health Declaration  
www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements)