

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
on the
National Dairy BJD Assurance Score
and
3-Step Calf Plan

November 2006



National Dairy BJD Assurance Score

Frequently Asked Questions (for vets and advisers)

The purpose of this FAQs and answers document is to provide consistent guidance for veterinary practitioners, government animal health staff and dairy herd advisers on the Dairy Score.

Individual and herd base Score

1. Do individual adult cattle have their own Score?

Yes. An individual adult animal's Score is derived from the herd's base Score (which is determined by the lowest Score animal on its property of origin) when the individual was less than 12 months of age; plus any applicable calf credits.

The underpinning principle is that cattle 12 months and older keep their Score for life because the risk of adult cattle becoming infected is low. However, in some situations their Score may change as further information on their assurance becomes available. For example, in a previously Non-Assessed herd, the Score for individual cattle may change if the herd is tested; because testing reveals additional information on the risk of BJD in the herd.

For example, where a NA herd has a Check Test with negative results, the Score for cattle within the herd is increased from Score 0 to Score 7.

During the transition period, some herds that test in the Control and Residual zones could theoretically revert to a lower Score (from Score 3 to Score 2) if there is subsequently found to be a high prevalence of infection in the herd.

Thus, in the literal sense, the Score for individual cattle (from a NA herd) is not strictly for life but until further assurance is demonstrated.

2. What is meant by the 'base Score' for a herd?

The base Score of the herd is the score of the lowest Score animal (ie. highest risk) in the herd. See also questions 15 & 16.

3. What is the base Score of a Non-Assessed herd during the introductory period of the Score?

A Non-Assessed herd is a herd that is not known or suspected to be infected and has not been tested. An introductory period will operate until **July 2008**. During this time all Non-Assessed herds in the Control and Residual zones will have a herd base **Score 3**.

After July 2008 all remaining Non-Assessed herds in the Control and Residual zones will revert to herd base Score 0; unless recognised BJD assurance measures that reduce the risk of BJD have been implemented.

A herd manager must implement either the 3-Step Plan or JDCAP before July 2008 for a Non-Assessed herd to be eligible to maintain its base Score 3 in the Control and Residual zones. Testing is another measure to progress the base score.

4. What is the starting base Score of a previously Non-Assessed herd that has blood test positive cattle at its first whole herd test?

In this situation, the presence of blood test positive cattle indicates that the herd may be infected and would be classed as Suspect (Score 1) until further testing is undertaken. A follow-up confirmatory test, using either faecal culture or slaughter and histopathological examination, should be performed to clarify the true disease status of the herd. If *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* is cultured or identified at post-mortem from one or more animals, the herd may then be classified as Infected. The herd would then have a base Score of 1 until further approved control measures that reduce the risk are implemented.

If a herd is found to be infected and implements a State approved control program, the Score will be determined by the number of reactors found at the initial whole herd test (see Table 1 below).

For herds enrolled in the South Australian Dairy ManaJD program, please consult the State's BJD coordinator in regard to the Score allocation during the initial whole herd testing phase.

Table 1 Guide to assigning a Dairy Score for individual animals in a herd by the proportion of blood test positive cattle found at an initial or subsequent whole herd test of cattle either two years and older or four years and older.

	Tested >2 year old	Tested >4 year old	Dairy Score
Low Prevalence	Less than 1.5%	Less than 2%	4
Medium Prevalence	Between 1.5% and 3%	Between 2% and 4%	3
High Prevalence	More than 3%	More than 4%	2

5. How does a herd maintain base Score 7?

Check Testing needs to be repeated within 24 months to maintain the base Score for a herd at Score 7.

A Check Test is a test of 50 animals in the herd, biased to increase the probability of detecting infection. Animals should be selected so as to increase the herd level sensitivity of the Check Test by maximising the probability of finding an infected animal. This is achieved by sampling those animals most

likely to be infected and most likely to react to the test. This includes: animals in poor condition, older animals, and introduced animals.

Calves

6. What are calf credits?

These are bonus points available to cattle when as calves they were reared in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian JDCAP (+3 credits) or the 3-Step Plan (+1 credit). Calf credits are added onto the herd's lowest base Score that the herd had in the animal's first 12 months of life. This then becomes the Score for those individual cattle reared under these programs.

For example, calves reared under the 3-Step Plan (+1 point) in a base Score 3 herd are eligible for Score 4 (3+1).

7. What is the maximum Score attainable for individual cattle reared as calves under either JDCAP or the 3-Step Plan?

Score 7 is the maximum individual animal Score for calves reared under either JDCAP (+3 points) or the 3-Step Plan (+1 point) where calf credits are added to the base Score for the herd.

For example, calves reared under JDCAP in a herd that is in the Victorian Test and Control Program, which has attained RD2 (Score 6), can only claim a maximum of Score 7 not Score 9.

8. Do calves reared under JDCAP or the 3-Step Plan keep their Score for life?

Yes. Calves reared under JDCAP can attain a maximum of Score 7 which is maintained for life eg. base Score 4 + 3 JDCAP credit points. The animals must have been reared under the JDCAP program for 12 months—although this may not necessarily have been continuous on the same property.

9. What is the definition of an adult animal in the context of the Dairy Score?

Any animal over 12 months of age.

10. Does a previously Non-Assessed herd that undertakes a Check Test, with negative results, have to implement the 3-Step Plan to maintain Score 7?

No, however it is strongly recommended, especially if cattle are being introduced into the herd for any reason.

Note that to maintain Score 7, the herd must be re-tested every 2 years by Check Testing 50 animals.

11. What is the base Score for a herd that has been implementing JDCAP for a number of years?

After 4 years of an approved calf rearing program the base herd score is increased by one point.

In herds where JDCAP has been implemented for **4 years or more**, and this can be substantiated with documentation, the **base Score of the herd is Score 4**.

In herds where JDCAP has been in place for **less than 4 years**, the **base Score of the herd is Score 3**, until 4 years of JDCAP is achieved.

12. At what age do calves reared under JDCAP or the 3-Step Plan become eligible to claim calf credits?

Calves **less than 12 months old are not eligible** to claim the relevant credit points towards their individual animal Score for life.

13. What happens if calves being reared under JDCAP or the 3-Step Plan are moved into another herd?

If calves are directly transferred from a herd that is implementing either JDCAP or the 3-Step Plan, the eligibility for calf credits is maintained. This is because the environment is of similar risk.

The base Score used for adding calf credit points (+1 or +3) is determined by lowest base Score herd they were exposed to in their first 12 months of life. In this way the highest risk environment (ie. lowest base Score) is used to calculate the individual animal Scores.

14. How will the 3-Step Calf Plan be audited?

Dairy companies have included the 3-Step Plan as part of their on-farm QA programs. This will initially operate as advisory and awareness raising process, with field staff supporting farmers as they implement the program. It is the herd manager's responsibility to keep records that can demonstrate implementation of their calf rearing plan.

Herd introductions

15. What happens to the base Score of the herd when adult cattle with a lower Score are introduced?

The **base Score of the herd is lowered to the lowest Score adult animal**.

Because individual adult animals keep their Score for life, there is no effect on the Scores of either the introduced adult cattle or the adult cattle already in the herd.

16. What happens to the base Score of a herd when adult cattle with a higher Score are introduced?

No change to the base Score of the herd.

17. How do leased and introduced bulls affect the base Score of a herd?

The situation with respect to bull introductions is considered different to that of introduced female cattle and there is no change in the base Score of a herd. This is due to the generally lower risk conditions associated with their introduction.

Farmers need to adopt sound risk management when bulls are to be introduced to ensure there is no increased risk of BJD. Factors which reduce the risk from the introduction of bulls are:

- Bulls are kept separate from calving cows and from animals less than 12 months of age
- Beef bulls have lower risk as BJD prevalence is much lower in beef cattle
- Young bulls (typically 2-4 years), even if infected, are unlikely to excrete organisms
- Bulls, if leased, spend only short time on the farm
- Small numbers of bulls introduced
- Bulls are introduced from CattleMAP herds

Declaring the Score

18. When required, how should farmers formally declare the Score?

From time to time a farmer may need to declare the Score in more detail than the National Vendor Declaration allows (eg for entry to a show). A standard declaration form is available for download from Animal Health Australia (www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au); the dairy industry BJD web site (www.dairy.com.au/bjd); or, by collection from local State government animal health offices.

19. How should buyers and sellers of replacement cattle declare the Score?

The Score should be written in **Section 9** on the **National Vendor Declaration** (NVD) as: "Dairy Score XX".

It is a mandatory requirement of the South Australian Dairy ManaJD program to declare the Score of all cattle offered for sale.

20. Are farmers issued with a Dairy Score certificate?

No certificates are issued for the Dairy Score; except for:

- Herds that have enrolled in the South Australian Dairy ManaJD program; or
- Herds that are participating in the Australian Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program for Cattle (CattleMAP) will have certificates for their respective MN status.

Information sources

21. What if I can't work out the Score?

In situations where determining the Score for a group of cattle is not clear, farmers are advised to contact an approved veterinarian or local State government animal health offices.

22. Where do I find information for interstate movement requirements on Johne's?

Local State government animal health offices or the State BJD coordinators should be contacted in relation to the BJD requirements for interstate movement, and any other animal health requirements.

23. What are the legal requirements with respect to the sale of land and bovine Johne's disease?

Please contact your local State government animal health office for advice.

24. What happens to a dairy farm that goes out of dairying and into beef production?

The Dairy Score does not apply to beef cattle.

A Non-Assessed herd on a dairy farm that subsequently becomes a beef farm is initially ineligible for the Beef Only scheme; unless the dairy herd was enrolled in the CattleMAP.

Please contact your local State government animal health office for further advice regarding Johne's disease in beef cattle and the declaration requirements for Beef Only.