

REDUCE THE RISK OF M. BOVIS - MANAGING DAIRY FARM CHANGEOVERS IN MAY/JUNE 2018

Changing farms this coming May/June requires extra special precautions because of *Mycoplasma bovis* (*M. bovis*). *M. bovis* is spread by the movement of infected animals and incoming infected cows (including calves, heifers, bulls, beef cattle as well as milking cows) can bring the disease onto the farm, even if they show no signs of having it. Once in a herd the disease is spread by close animal to animal contact.

While *M. bovis* is a new disease in New Zealand, if it becomes endemic, it can be managed, much like TB, leptospirosis, BVD and Johne's disease.

Dairy farms all over the country are being tested via bulk milk testing of individual herds and cows from the sick mob for the presence of the organism. Individual farmers should know the results two weeks after the final milk sample has been collected. A 'not detected' result can give farmers an indication that the herd is free of disease and help with farm management decisions. This result is not, however, an absolute guarantee that a property is free from the disease. The tests will pick up if any cows were shedding *Mycoplasma bovis* at the time of sampling, but it is possible for infected cows to be present in a herd but not shedding at the time of sample collection.

Those who use the sharemilking and contract milking business model are particularly vulnerable to financial shocks should a disease like *M. bovis* come onto the farm. If at all possible, stay on the current farm, with the same herd. Or, if you are a farmowner, keep the current sharemilker, with the current herd. However, this may not be possible or desired.

There are some simple precautions sharemilkers, contract milkers and farm owners can take to minimise the risk of bringing it on farm. If everyone is clear about the level of risk being faced, decisions can be made – it's all about communication.

YOU ARE A FARM OWNER, LOOKING TO BRING ON A NEW CONTRACT MILKER OR SHAREMILKER

1. Ask where any incoming stock are coming from.
2. Ask for bulk milk *M. bovis* test results of the source herd(s) if available.
3. Ask if the stock have been mingling with other cattle – can you get any information about these other herds, such as bulk milk testing results?
4. Ask about the health of the incoming stock – including calf health, mastitis, pneumonia, ear infections, swollen joints.
5. Ask if the NAIT recordings have been completed for all cow, calf, cattle movements.
6. Set aside land where new animals can be kept, separate to stock already on farm, for seven days for quarantine purposes.
7. Check to see that all equipment coming on farm is clean and dry.
8. Inform the incoming sharemilker or contract milker about any *M. bovis* tracing by MPI that has been carried out on the farm, and any instructions given by MPI that may affect how the herd is managed.

YOU ARE A SHAREMILKER OR CONTRACT MILKER, SHIFTING ONTO A NEW FARM

1. Buy animals from as few different farms as possible. Ask for the bulk milk *M. bovis* test results of the 2017/18 herd if available
2. Supply the farm owner with any *M. bovis* test results you may have.
3. Ask if the herd has been mixed with any other animals in the past 12 months, including at wintering. Ask if it is possible to get the bulk milk *M. bovis* test results of that herd.
4. Ask about the health of the cows and calves on the far during the 2017/18 season – including calf health, mastitis, pneumonia, ear infections, swollen joints.
5. Complete all NAIT movement recordings.
6. When bringing new animals onto the farm, keep them separate from others for seven days and check them for signs of ill health.
7. Clean and dry all incoming machinery and equipment.
8. Ask if the farm has been subject to any tracing from MPI for *M. bovis*.

