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Dairy Industry Launches Action Johne's Initiative

London, 1st April 2015 – The dairy industry is joining forces to launch its Action Johne's Initiative, which will help manage and reduce the incidence of Johne's disease in dairy cattle.

The Initiative, developed by the Action Group on Johne's, aims at engaging 80% of dairy farmers in Great Britain in credible and robust Johne's management activities by October 2016.

The Initiative will implement the requirements of the National Johne's Management Plan, and will be delivered by the newly established Action Johne's Delivery Team, a consortium of SAC Consulting, a division of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and RAFT Solutions Ltd., jointly funded by DairyCo and milk purchasers.

Lyndon Edwards, Chairman of the Action Group on Johne's and of the Dairy UK Farmers Forum, said: "The industry-wide consultation of the draft project made it clear that the dairy industry wants to work together to tackle this disease. International experience has shown that if a rigorous control program is instituted and applied robustly, Johne's disease can be brought under control. This is confirmed by my own personal experience as a dairy farmer who has been successfully managing the disease on my farm for seven years. I'm pleased that all major stakeholders have come together to support this initiative which should deliver lasting benefits to the industry."

Derek Armstrong, DairyCo programme manager for endemic diseases, said: "We are funding the Action Johne's Initiative because we are confident it will generate significant commercial gains to dairy farmers through healthier and more productive animals. Johne's has a major impact on industry profitability but can be managed in a cost effective manner. The initiative will also demonstrate the industry's commitment to improving standards of animal welfare."

Rob Harrison, NFU Dairy Board Chairman, said: "It is vitally important that as an industry, we manage Johne's disease if we are to remain competitive and have a sustainable future for the dairy sector. There are huge potential cost benefits to be had by getting on top of this disease and we welcome the introduction of this initiative."

Dr Hazel Wright, FUW Senior Policy Officer, said: "The Union recognises the importance of tackling this costly disease and has engaged in the development of this initiative in order to give voice to the perspectives and needs of farmers in Wales. The Union will continue to remain involved in order to ensure that the maximum benefits of this valuable initiative are provided to Wales."

NFU Scotland's Animal Health and Welfare Policy Manager, Penny Johnston said: "While Johne's is a difficult disease to tackle, this unified approach across the dairy sector is welcome and provides an excellent platform to make serious inroads into its incidence. At farm level, we need to lift the

stigma attached to infection and offer support and advice to any affected producers so they have a clear route to removing the disease from their stock.”

Speaking about the requirements of Action Johne’s Initiative, Mr Edwards added: “What we are asking of farmers in phase 1 is initially very modest. We just want them to assess the risks of entry, presence and spread of MAP infection in their herd and determine their Johne’s risk and status by March 2016. By October 2016 we want them to have implemented in consultation with their vet one of the six control strategies developed by the Action Group on Johne’s. We’ll then review the plan and determine how it should be taken forward in phase 2.

“The initiative is a cross industry collaborative exercise that requires the support and engagement of all stakeholders in the journey we are about to embark upon and I thank them all for their support.”

Sophie Throup of RAFT Solutions, who will coordinate the delivery team and work alongside SAC Consulting, said: “Our job will be to help educate farmers about the disease and the feasibility of its control; ensure consistent, coherent and technically sound advice is available to vets, farmers and farm advisors, and build the foundations for a more coherent approach in dealing with Johne’s. We are looking forward to working in partnership with the industry and getting involved”

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Notes

Media contacts

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Action Group on Johne’s

The Action Johne’s Initiative has been developed by the Action Group on Johne’s, which is an open forum for industry stakeholders interested in tackling Johne’s. The Action Group on Johne’s is chaired by Lyndon Edwards, a dairy farmer from Gloucester, who is also a Director of OMSCo and Chairman of Dairy UK’s Farmers’ Forum. The secretariat support to the Action Group on Johne’s is provided by Dairy UK. More information at www.actionjohnesuk.org.

National Johne’s Management Plan

The Action Johne’s Initiative constitutes the active implementation of the requirements of the National Johne’s Management Plan, which was developed by the Action Group on Johne’s, unveiled in November 2014 for industry consultation which closed in February 2015.

Delivery of Action Johne’s

Funding for the Action Johne’s Initiative will be provided by DairyCo and matched in total by an equal contribution from individual milk purchasers, both co-op and private. The Action Johne’s Delivery Team consists of a consortium of SAC Consulting and RAFT Solutions Ltd and XLVets. The team were appointed through their experience in delivering the Paraban project, recent Defra RDPE Johne’s training, in put to the UK Cattle Expert Group and the expertise of George Gunn, George Caldow, Colin Mason, David Black, Johnathan Statham and Alastair Hayton, all of whom will be involved in the project.