



UNDERSTANDING CATTLE HEALTH DECLARATIONS

The Cattle Health Declaration is currently gaining significant exposure as a tool for producers to address biosecurity concerns. It's a document that allows producers to make an assessment of cattle they might be purchasing and the biosecurity risk those cattle may pose. The Cattle Health Declaration is starting to be requested by producers buying cattle from studs and through saleyards. For many producers biosecurity is a new concept so it's understandable that many producers have questions about the Cattle Health Declaration.

Be sure to check out the table over the page for a quick, easy to use guide on when to use a Cattle Health Declaration.

What is a Cattle Health Declaration and why should I ask for one when buying cattle?

The Cattle Health Declaration is a tool that can assist producers in assessing the biosecurity risks of new stock being introduced to your property. It is designed to be used when animals are being bought and sold. It allows sellers to provide buyers with additional information relating to the health of the animals they are bringing onto their property. It is separate to the National Vendor Declaration waybill (NVD) because the questions on the NVD relate primarily to food safety, whereas the Cattle Health Declaration is animal health related.

Prior to purchase or receipt of incoming agistment stock, producers should request a Cattle Health Declaration to gather further information relevant to the health of their new purchases or incoming agistment stock. This helps producers manage the health of incoming animals as well as their existing herd.

When should I send a Cattle Health Declaration with my cattle?

When selling cattle it is recommended that you send a Cattle Health Declaration along with your sale cattle in most instances.

If a person requests a Cattle Health Declaration then you should provide one prior to sale. Buyers actively managing animal health, participating in Johne's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS) or trading in Johne's disease sensitive markets are likely going to want this document.

If you are sending cattle to a saleyard it is recommended to send a Cattle Health Declaration with your cattle to maximise your market opportunity.

How does the Cattle Health Declaration fit in with J-BAS?

If you are participating in J-BAS you should send and request this document as part of your risk assessment. Requesting this document when you buy cattle can provide additional information such as J-BAS level or if there is an increased risk of infection in the animals you are looking to buy. Having this information gives you the opportunity to manage the risk of Johne's disease in incoming animals.

Are Cattle Health Declarations mandatory?

The Cattle Health Declaration is not mandatory unless your cattle are Northern Territory bound. This is an entry requirement of the Northern Territory Government. If you do not send this document with your cattle they will not be able to move into the Northern Territory until one is completed.

If you don't provide a Cattle Health Declaration to buyers who require them to move the cattle after sale you could be limiting your markets.

When do I not need a Cattle Health Declaration?

If your cattle are going straight to the abattoir or to a feedlot, you will probably find they will not request a Cattle Health Declaration. The Declaration is for herd health management. Feedlots and abattoirs are more concerned with food safety issues so will be wanting to receive the NVD.

Where can I get a Cattle Health Declaration?

Cattle Health Declarations are available online at the Farm Biosecurity website (<http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/>).

How do I fill out a Cattle Health Declaration?

Producers should answer the questions honestly. You do not need to test for any of the diseases on the Cattle Health Declaration but if you have done in the past you should describe your results on the form. Producers are making a declaration when filling out a Cattle Health Declaration. When the form asks for specific vaccinations or treatments it is asking if you have applied anything to the animals travelling to sale in the last six months.

If you are participating in J-BAS you should describe your J-BAS status in Question 6. Whilst the form says optional, it refers to the scheme of J-BAS being optional. If you have a J-BAS score you should record your score.

J-BAS MARKET ACCESS QUICK GUIDE

	Should I fill in a Cattle Health Declaration?	Do I need a J-BAS to trade into this market?	J-BAS status required
Sending cattle to a Northern Territory property or for live export	Yes – Mandatory	Yes	J-BAS 6 (to enter NT)
Sending cattle to slaughter to a Northern Territory abattoir	Yes – Mandatory	No	Not required
Sending cattle to a Western Australian property	Recommended	Yes	QLD / NT : J-BAS 7 NSW/SA/VIC/TAS : J-BAS 8
Sending cattle to Western Australia direct for export or slaughter	Recommended	Yes	All states : J-BAS 6
Sending cattle to a Western Australian property travelling via the Northern Territory	Yes – Mandatory (for entry into the NT)	Yes	QLD / NT : J-BAS 7 NSW/SA/VIC/TAS : J-BAS 8
Sending cattle to Western Australia for export or slaughter travelling via the Northern Territory	Yes – Mandatory (for entry into the NT)	Yes	All states : J-BAS 6
Sending cattle into NSW / QLD	Recommended	No (unless your buyer requests J-BAS)	Not required <i>Note: If you bring JD infected animals or animals you believe to be infected into Queensland or NSW, you must report this to the relevant authority.</i>
Sending cattle into VIC, TAS or SA	Recommended	No (unless your buyer requests J-BAS)	Market Driven
Sending cattle to saleyards	Recommended	Contact Agent	Contact Agent
Sending cattle live export from QLD or NSW	Recommended	No	Not required
Sending cattle direct to abattoir in QLD, NSW, VIC, SA or TAS	No	No	Not required
Sending cattle to feedlots	Recommended	Contact Agent /Feedlot	Not required

Disclaimer: This table is true and correct as of November 2017, for interstate cattle movements it is always recommended that the sender contact the relevant state prior to moving the cattle.

FACT SHEET



Johne's disease, what are the risks in Saleyards?

Johne's disease (JD) enters a herd through the introduction of infected animals, either by purchasing or agisting infected stock. As the majority of cattle spend very little time at the saleyards the risk of transmission of JD from one animal to another, from nose to nose contact or through feed and water, is so low as to be virtually non-existent.

The most important JD transmission route is from cow to calf through infected milk or faeces. The next highest risk transmission of JD is to vulnerable young cattle when grazing infected pastures. Pastures are more likely to be infected by dairy cattle and very unlikely to be infected by extensively grazed beef cattle.

A buyer interested in avoiding the introduction of JD should clarify the cattle's John's Beef Assurance Score (J-BAS) prior to purchase. This is available on a Cattle Health Declaration (CHD) along with other important animal health information. Buyers can request a CHD from vendors and ask additional questions to be sure any risks from JD are well understood.

J-BAS is a voluntary tool. However, some markets require a J-BAS. Producers who wish to sell cattle to Western Australia or the Northern Territory should contact the relevant state department for more information.

How is it transmitted?

Cattle infected with JD excrete the bacteria in their manure. The bacteria contaminates pasture and watercourses, spreading infection to other cattle sharing the same paddocks. Cattle are most likely to contract the infection as a calf.

Cattle often do not show any symptoms of JD for many years and are likely to excrete the JD bacteria before developing clinical signs. Most beef cattle in Queensland are culled before any clinical signs of JD are present. JD is a higher risk to breeding stock but in terms of production loss - JD is far less of a risk than diseases such as vibriosis or pestivirus that are more common.

What are the risks?

The risk of contracting JD in Queensland is very low. Large parts of Australia and the majority of Australian beef cattle herds are free of JD. Dairy cattle are much higher risk than extensive grazing beef cattle.

Research in southern Australia showed that heat and sunlight destroyed the bacteria; under normal summer conditions in paddocks and waterways, around 90% of the bacteria die within 6 weeks. But in moist, shaded conditions, the bacteria can survive for longer than 12 months. For this reason cattle that have been co grazing on dairy land in Victoria are higher risk than cattle originating from Queensland.





How are risks managed in the Saleyard?

Good saleyard biosecurity practices manage the risks of JD spread.

Practices that reduce the likelihood of cattle contracting JD at a saleyard include:

- ensuring that cows with young calves remain together as a unit and are not boxed/penned with cattle from a different property of origin or J-BAS;
- ensuring that all bobby calves are sold off concrete (to enable wash down of the pens post sale) or bare dirt;
- ensuring that the bedding used in selling pens is not edible (e.g. where possible stud cattle will be penned on wood chip bedding);
- regular cleaning of pens to remove or dry out faecal material;
- presale cleaning of all water troughs to ensure they are free of foreign material;
- feeding of cattle from elevated bunks or hay racks to eliminate the potential for the fodder to be contaminated by faeces; and
- it is recommended that all cattle delivered to the site are accompanied with a CHD that contains the J-Bas status of the animal being sold.

Note: Management reserves the right to refuse entry to animals considered high risk i.e. those animals not accompanied by a CHD.

Transport of cattle

Transporting cattle is very low risk and there is no need to separate different J-BAS status animals on the truck.

On property management

Introducing cattle with a lower J-BAS score may affect your J-BAS status unless you are confident that the source herd is low risk and well managed under good biosecurity practices.

The handling of introduced animals should be addressed as per the requirements outlined in the on-property Biosecurity Plan and handled through actions like monitoring them for signs of illness, keeping them separate from vulnerable young cattle on the property and if a J-BAS 7 or 8 is desired - testing them.

The introduction of new animals into J-BAS 7 and 8 herds should be discussed with your veterinary advisor before purchasing the animals. Herds selling cattle to WA will need to check with the WA Department for entry requirements.

Why is it important to check cattle health status?

Introduction of disease into a cattle herd can severely impact on a business, especially a breeding enterprise. Utilising industry developed tools like cattle health declarations and developing an on-farm biosecurity plan will help you make informed decisions about the cattle you have purchased.

Australia's clean green production system is a competitive advantage in international markets. Several of Australia's major markets and competitor countries require certification of the JD status of live animal exports, so infected herds could be excluded from particular markets that require certification of absence of the disease.

Buyers should obtain a copy of the CHD from the saleyard to obtain information on the health status of the cattle they have purchased. This will also ensure they meet the record keeping requirements of their on-property Biosecurity Plan.

Developed in conjunction with:

 **AAM**
Investment Group

 **RLX**
REGIONAL LIVESTOCK EXCHANGES



JOHNE'S DISEASE IN CATTLE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a 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 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 AHA's 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.

What happens if I didn't have a biosecurity plan by 30 June 2017?

Initially, all herds were given a transition score based on the old zoning system. Herds in NSW, Qld, NT and northern SA were given a transition score of J-BAS 7, as were herds known as Beef Only. All herds in WA were given a transition score of J-BAS 8. These transition scores expired on 30 June 2017.

Without a biosecurity plan, herds with a transition score of 7 or 8 became J-BAS 6. Producers who missed the deadline do however, have the opportunity to return to their transition score by implementing a biosecurity plan now (signed by their veterinarian) and conducting the first Check test by 30 June 2018 with clear results.

(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 and what's been done since.)

How do I know what score I should give my cattle?

The scores are based on the likelihood of a herd's previous exposure to JD and a producer's preparedness in managing risks. The score sheet can be found here - www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/jd-cattle-tools

What score should I aim for in my business?

Many producers may decide that they do not need a score if JD is not a disease that they are worried about with their business. If you are a producer who accesses the WA market or NT market, or are likely to sell cattle to a producer who does, you should aim to meet their entry requirements. Producers should remain JD aware if they intend to access the live export trade.

How is J-BAS being enforced?

J-BAS is a voluntary self-declaration. There is no central authority signing off on plans; however buyers, markets and jurisdictions with entry requirements may request a copy of your Cattle Health Declaration, on-farm biosecurity plan and test results.

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 with writing a plan. This document can be found on the Animal Health Australia website here - www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/endemic-disease/farm-biosecurity-plan.

Other acceptable templates exist (e.g., LBN's template, the vet BioCheck). LPA will be utilising this template, although slightly reduced in size.

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 J-BAS 7 and 8, your biosecurity plan must be checked and signed by a veterinarian and have undertaken a 'Check test' with negative results. Without veterinary oversight of a plan you will not be eligible for scores 7 or 8. It is not intended for the vet to audit the plan, merely sign to say they've explained the JD-related biosecurity risks to you. For anything below J-BAS 7, or for biosecurity planning generally, it is wise but not essential to consult a vet.

What is a 'Check test'?

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

Producers need to do the first one by 30 June 2018 but should leave ample time to do it so that lab capacity is not an issue. After that date a Sample Test (of more animals) will be required to progress a herd to J-BAS 7, and two Sample tests to J-BAS 8. For testing, vet involvement is required.

Do I need a Cattle Health Declaration?

Although not mandatory for J-BAS, a Cattle Health Declaration is for use by producers to assess the animal health information about animals they may wish to buy. Some states/territories have mandated its use for cattle entering (NT, SA). 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 here - www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements

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 sheep industry, the Ovine Johne's Disease Management Plan (OJDMP) exists. For the cattle sector, the new JD management Framework is in place. 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, including vaccines and Animal 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.

What are my biosecurity requirements under LPA from 1 October 2017?

First, LPA and J-BAS are separate programs. Second, LPA accredited producers will be required to meet biosecurity and animal welfare requirements from 1 October 2017. Producers who have already developed an on-farm biosecurity plan as part of their approach to Johne's disease management are not required to complete another: www.mla.com.au/meat-safety-and-traceability/red-meat-integrity-system/about-the-livestock-production-assurance-program/seven-lpa-requirements/biosecurity

FURTHER INFORMATION

BIOSECURITY PLANS

[Livestock Biosecurity Network On-farm biosecurity plan template](#)
www.lbn.org.au/farm-biosecurity-tools/planning-tools

JD IN CATTLE TOOLS

[Johne's Beef Assurance Score](#) -
www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/jd-cattle-tools

[Johne's disease score in Dairy cattle](#) -
www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Animal-management/Animal-health/Bovine-Johnes-Disease.aspx