

# MANAGING LEPTOSPIROSIS

## During periods of limited vaccine availability

### How do I reduce the risk of introducing disease into a herd?

#### Carefully source replacement breeding stock

- Newly purchased animals should ideally come from a herd free from leptospirosis.
- Serological screening of purchased animals may help to identify animals that are of low risk.
- Animals that test negative for antibody after a post purchase isolation period of at least two weeks could be considered uninfected. Those that test positive for antibody at purchase or after a suitable period of isolation should be considered to be infected.
- Antibiotic treatment of seropositive infected animals may not result in a 100% cure rate - there is little published data on success rates.



#### The shared bull

- A shared bull should be viewed as a risk that can introduce infection.

#### Prevent cattle accessing open water courses shared by other cattle or sheep upstream

- Leptospire can survive in water, therefore, cattle access to watercourses should be restricted if cattle or sheep upstream have access to the same watercourse.



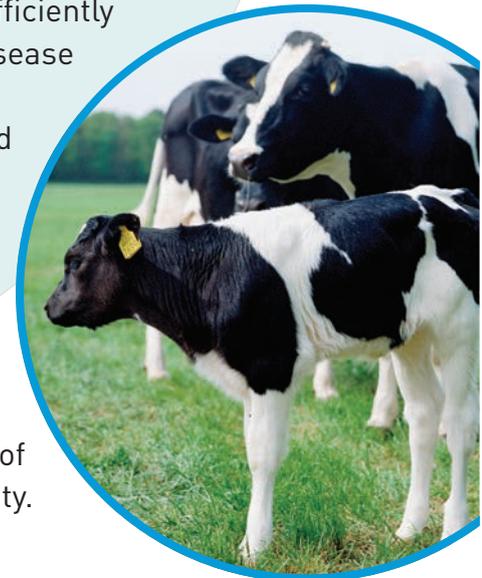
### Which herds should I vaccinate when vaccine is limited?

#### Naïve herds

- A full biosecurity assessment should be undertaken to assess the risk of disease introduction. If adequate measures cannot be put in place to sufficiently reduce the risk of disease introduction, then vaccination may need to be continued.

#### Infected herds

- In endemically infected herds, cattle management practices will have a role to play in levels of natural herd immunity.



#### Avoid close proximity to sheep or co-grazing with sheep

- Co-grazing with sheep should be avoided and pasture should be left free of stock for a period of at least four weeks.



- A dairy herd, raising its heifer replacements separately to the main herd, will have a regular supply of naïve animals.
- In a beef-suckler herd rearing their own replacements, the adults and young stock co-graze and therefore there is greater likelihood at least some of the heifers will acquire some natural immunity before reaching breeding age.

- The risk of zoonotic exposure is much higher in dairy herds compared to beef herds.
- Therefore, taking these points into consideration, where vaccine supply is limited consider vaccinating dairy herds ahead of beef-suckler herds. Individual herd circumstances need to be taken into consideration.



## Which animals should I vaccinate in a herd when vaccine is limited?

- In a dairy herd with endemic infection, the replacement heifers are most at risk of infection when they enter the main herd. These animals should be prioritised over other cattle and should receive a full primary vaccination course ahead of reaching breeding age.
  - Adult cattle will have some level of immunity (depending on when last vaccinated), which may have been boosted by some natural exposure.
- Speak to your vet for animal health advice specific to your farm.

## How do I reduce the risk of zoonotic spread?

- The main risk of infection from cattle is to people working closely with animals, who are most at risk of coming in contact with infected body fluids or tissue.
- Protective gowns and gloves should be worn (especially in the milking parlour) to avoid contaminating exposed skin, and where appropriate, wearing face shields to avoid inhalation of aerosols.
- It is important to remember that infection can be fatal, and all farm staff should be reminded of the clinical signs and to report any unexpected, prolonged or severe illness to their doctor, highlighting leptospirosis as a possibility.
- The most common signs of infection are fever, headaches, rash, ocular pain, muscle pain, and malaise.
- It is worth reminding farm workers that infection can also occur from natural wildlife sources e.g. rats.

