

The New Zealand Dairy Industry EBL Control Scheme Progress Report

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Livestock Improvement

In 1997 the New Zealand Dairy Industry introduced an enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL) control scheme. The scheme is self-funded by the industry with no government intervention. Test-and-cull compliance is enforced by local dairy companies via a condition of supply clause. Herd EBL status is essentially driven by the lowest status of any cow in the herd. Livestock Improvement administers the scheme and maintains both herd and cow EBL status on the national dairy database.

Initial herd screening has employed enzyme-linked immunosorbent assays (ELISA) for antibody detection in herd test milk samples pooled in groups of 20. Positive individual milk results are confirmed by serum antibody ELISA and reactors must be culled.

Positive EBL herds must achieve a negative whole herd test at least 60 days after removal of the last reactor to become provisionally negative. Herds may then progress over 3 seasons to EBL-free status by annual negative herd tests. Currently, EBL-free herds are monitored every alternate year by a combination of pooled milk and vat milk ELISAs.

At the scheme's inception, the national herd prevalence in New Zealand was 6.3%. In June 2005 a single EBL-positive herd remained (point prevalence <0.01%). During the 2004/5 season, five EBL-positive cows in four 'incident' herds were identified. Three of these herds had recently achieved provisionally negative status; the remaining herd was previously EBL-free but its index cow was linked to an outbreak in another herd in 2003/4. All incident herds undergo epidemiological investigations to contain any possible spread to other herds.