

How does the service work?

Sampling, testing and management protocols

Sampling and management protocols have been developed for each disease covered by the service, using the extensive expertise of AHVLA.

The diseases included are bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), Johne's disease, liver fluke, leptospirosis, infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and neosporosis.

Three levels of health status

There are three levels of health status within each of the Herdsure® protocols.

We will issue an annual herd progress report. (See Appendix 3 for an example). **It is important that you have carried out testing according to the protocols in order for the report to be issued.**

Level 1: Establishes the health status of the herd

The sampling and testing described in Level 1 are designed to give an accurate and reliable assessment of the status of each particular disease in the herd.

The outcome will be that a significant amount of the disease either is, or is not, present in the herd. The definition of what is significant varies for each disease and has been determined by scientific and veterinary experts.

Where there is recent documented evidence of a particular disease in the herd, testing at Level 1 will be considered superfluous. In these cases, herds will be advised to start the protocol at Level 2.

Level 2: Aims to improve the health status of the herd

The sampling, testing and, if appropriate, management actions described in Level 2 are designed to reduce the amount of disease to nothing or to an acceptable level, depending on the disease in question.

For most diseases, there are necessary and important management actions, which are determined by the test results and which are designed to reduce or eliminate the disease. These management actions include providing certain treatments (for example, for liver fluke), vaccination, segregation of certain categories of cattle and, for some diseases, removal of 'positives' through culling.

Your veterinary practitioner is informed of the required management actions through specific advice given in the full protocols in the handbook for veterinary practitioners.

Level 3: Monitors and aims to maintain the improved health status of the herd

The sampling, testing and, if appropriate, management actions described in Level 3 are designed to maintain the improved, or otherwise satisfactory, health status of the herd.

Herds will be able to move to Level 3 in two ways:

- directly from Level 1, when the results of testing in the Level 1 protocol show no evidence of active disease.
- via Level 2, when sampling and testing carried out at Level 2 has resulted in the removal of active disease.

An **annual herd progress report** will be issued to Herdsure® members. The progress report will detail the level achieved for each protocol for which the herd is enrolled on the date of issue.

Convenient sampling and testing¹

The protocols are supported by high quality laboratory tests, many of which are subject to third party accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) operating to the internationally recognised ISO/IEC 17025 standard for laboratory competence. All tests carried out under the Herdsure® service are accredited to this standard unless marked with '†' on reports.

We have developed a novel IT system, the Herdsure® Management System (HMS), which is used in-house to manage customer records and to monitor each herd. It also prompts you and your veterinary practitioner when tests are due and informs you which animals are to be tested. **For this reason it is important that no samples are submitted until you and your veterinary practitioner are prompted to do so.**

What to expect when sampling is due

If bulk milk or faeces samples are required, AHVLA will contact both you and your veterinary practitioner with a reminder. AHVLA will send you sample submission forms with lists of ear tag numbers of animals to be sampled (see Appendices 5 and 6 for examples) plus postage-paid labels. We use herd data from the British Cattle Movement Service Cattle Tracing Scheme (BCMS CTS) with filtering to include, for example, only cattle of certain age groups.

Ear tags will be presented as text (e.g. UK123456 789123) for use on the farm. The same code will be represented as a barcode for scanning into AHVLA's sample management system, e.g.



Postage-paid labels are provided for you to return the samples to AHVLA.

¹ Tests are carried out under AHVLA 'Standard Terms and Conditions for Supply of Services'. These are available on request from your local AHVLA Regional Laboratory, from AHVLA Weybridge or on the AHVLA website at www.defra.gov.uk/AHVLA. By submitting a sample to any AHVLA laboratory, customers are deemed to accept these arrangements. Customers will be notified if samples are unsuitable for testing.

No disease or disease-free status *per se* of any animal is conferred, nor should be implied, by any single test result. No value is conveyed, nor should be implied, to any animal(s) to which results relate. Maximum liability to the customer for loss or damage arising from an inaccurate report based on a single test is limited to £1,000. It should be borne in mind that all tests have intrinsic inaccuracies.

In circumstances where a test result may be used as part of an assessment of disease status, a number of repeated tests or test samplings is advisable to minimise the chance of conferring a misleading status to any animal. If any test result is used to establish the disease status of any animal(s), due consideration should be given to seeking independent insurance to cover any implied value or cost that this status or change of status may convey.

There will be a number of occasions when your vet may wish to submit samples for additional tests, for example when you have purchased new stock. See section below on 'unscheduled samples'.

Receiving reports

Test results will be returned to your veterinary practitioner in a results report. This will include some explanation of the results. (See Appendix 4 for an example.)

Diagnostic testing

If you have animals on your farm showing signs of disease, please contact your veterinary practitioner who will arrange for samples to be submitted to the local AHVLA Regional Laboratory for diagnostic purposes. This is quite separate to the testing you are carrying out for health improvement purposes so will not be tested within the Herdsure[®] programme.

Biosecurity

Good biosecurity is essential to the success of improving the health of your herd. Infectious diseases cannot be effectively controlled without also implementing effective biosecurity on your farm.

Guidance on biosecurity and other aspects of herd management is provided to support the protocols and should be discussed with your veterinary practitioner. You are advised to pay special attention to this advice as it is of great importance to achieving and maintaining improved herd health.

Once you have started a programme to eradicate a disease, or indeed have achieved eradication and want to remain disease-free, it is important that you follow recommended biosecurity procedures. You will find these in the relevant disease sections and the protocols include further information.

'Buying in' replacement cattle is a regular practice on many farms. The disease protocols outline the procedures and testing necessary to protect against introducing disease from added cattle. Your veterinary practitioner will advise you about situations when extra testing may be necessary.

Summary of the service

Assurance that the assessment and management of the health status of your herds is being done in a structured, carefully planned way.

- can support health plans.
- up-to-date sampling, testing and management protocols suitable for both beef and dairy herds
- continual monitoring of your farm, including reminders when tests are due.
- submission forms with ear tag numbers of animals to be sampled.
- provision of sample containers for bulk milk samples.
- postage-paid labels for the submission of all samples.
- guidance and advice relevant to your herd (available to your registered veterinary practitioner).

How to join the service

Subscription to the service

Subscription to the service is by the veterinary practitioner completing a Farm Registration Form B (see the example in Appendix 1) and sending this to AHVLA.

You will either have chosen to pay a subscription to include all the disease protocols from the start or you will be able to ask your veterinary practitioner to add further protocols to your agreement as you go along.

Definition of a registered herd

For the purposes of determining subscriptions (see details below) and also for herd management within protocols, a registered farm needs to be a single holding with a single County Parish Holding number (CPH). One registration covers all the animals registered on that holding, whether dairy or beef, and whether managed within a single herd or multiple herds or groups. The selected protocol for a disease (or number of diseases) will be applied to all the cattle kept under one holding number.

If a herd (that is cattle under one management system) is kept on two separate holdings with separate CPH numbers, both holdings should be registered at the same time. So that cattle can continue to move between the two (or more) holdings, both holdings should follow the chosen disease protocol(s) at the same time.

Where two or more herds are under the same ownership but under different management systems and have different CPH numbers, they will need to be registered for Herdsure® separately and will be tracked separately through the disease protocols.

Definitions of cattle classes according to age and type

For the purpose of the Herdsure® service, the following definitions of cattle classes will apply.

Milking cow or dairy cow	An animal that has given birth to at least one calf and is used for the production of milk.
Beef cow, beef suckler cow or suckler cow	An animal that has given birth to at least one calf and is used to suckle the calf or other calves.
Breeding bull	An entire male animal which is over 1-year-old and is, or is intended to be, used for breeding purposes.
Youngstock	All male and all female cattle (up to the birth of their first calf) from birth, regardless of breed or intended purpose. The only exception is breeding bulls over 1 year of age.

How much does the service cost?

There is an annual subscription charge, based on the size of your herd and the number of disease protocols to which you subscribe; your veterinary practitioner will invoice you for this.

Tests are charged for separately, at competitive rates, and you will also be invoiced for these by your veterinary practitioner.

Invoicing

Each month, your veterinary practitioner will be sent details of any Herdsure® testing that has been carried out, along with details of any subscriptions that are due. If you have enrolled into the service and subscribed to a further disease protocol or your herd has been recently tested, your veterinary practitioner will be notified of the payment due.