

Quick Guide

to the Herdsure® Cattle Health Improvement Service

Introduction

This is a quick guide to the Herdsure®¹ Cattle Health Improvement Service and how you access it. The main body of the handbook describes the service fully.

Cattle health management is vital to maximise the productive potential of herds and to reduce the cost of disease to the farm business. It is also an essential part of animal health and welfare. 'Proactive' cattle health management involves assessing the impact of disease on the farm and implementing a strategy to reduce the impact of that disease.

The Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) aims to act as the **facilitator** of health management via the service, offering a means of assessing and improving the health status of cattle.

Sampling, testing and management protocols are available for bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), Johne's disease, liver fluke infection, infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), leptospirosis and neosporosis.

Protocols provide step-by-step guidance on how to approach the control or eradication of each disease, depending on the local circumstances of each farm. They help the veterinary practitioner to develop a robust plan for testing, treatment and monitoring of the herd. 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.

Advice on biosecurity and other herd management factors is provided within the protocols.

The service is supported by the Herdsure® Management System (HMS), a specially developed IT system used by AHVLA, designed to manage customer records, monitor each farm and prompt when sampling is due.

¹ The name Herdsure® has been introduced and registered as a trademark for use with AHVLA's new cattle health services. This, and associated names, may be applied to future services as well as the Cattle Health Improvement Service – for example other new offerings originating from the wide range of services currently delivered for the overall health of livestock and support of AHVLA's customers.


What are the main benefits for the veterinary practitioner?


- Herdsure® offers an additional service to provide to your farmer clients in order to support health management.
- Health management strategies and planned and structured approaches to sampling and testing, developed by AHVLA experts, ensure optimal quality of service.
- The unique IT support system in use by AHVLA, HMS, provides prompts and the identification of animals to be sampled to both you and your farmer client (as appropriate), thus reducing the management role of your busy veterinary practice.
- Guidance and advice are provided in this handbook, plus further telephone consultancy is available if required.

What are the main benefits for your farmer clients?

- Improved herd health through the control of up to six major cattle diseases.
- Better knowledge of cattle health status leading to improved production and less financial loss.
- User-friendly and straightforward to implement.
- Minimal record keeping owing to automatic tracking of progress and prompting when tests are due.
- Minimal paperwork, for example by informing farmers (and their veterinary practitioner) when tests are due.

Main features of the service

- Sampling, testing and management protocols suitable for both beef and dairy herds, commercial and pedigree, developed by AHVLA disease experts.
- Detailed guidance and advice for veterinary practitioners in this handbook and further consultancy when required.
- Access to a telephone helpline for technical enquiries and consultancy related to farms enrolled into the service for the veterinary practitioner.
- Flexible/tiered subscription based on the size of the herd and the diseases chosen.
- A separate handbook for your subscribing farmer clients, which explains the main features of the service and their role within it.
- Submission forms with pre-printed ear tag numbers of animals to be sampled, where appropriate.
- Provision of sampling containers and packaging for farmers to collect relevant samples. These can then be returned using convenient postage-paid Business Reply labels. 

- Proactive monitoring of each registered farm, including reminders to both veterinary practitioners and farmer when tests are due. 
- Generation of reports in ways that best suit your practice.
- Issue of annual herd progress reports.

Key to symbols used throughout the protocols



Use Herdsure® postage-paid Business Reply labels.



Indicates there will be reminders sent when tests are due.



This symbol indicates a biosecurity issue.

The three levels of health status within the protocols

Protocols describe a programme of testing, treatment and continued monitoring that assist both the veterinary practitioner and the farmer to control and reduce disease and its detrimental impact on the farm and the herd.

- **Level 1** establishes the health status of the herd with regard to the diseases included in the Herdsure® protocols.
- **Level 2** aims to improve the health status of the herd with regard to the diseases included in the Herdsure® protocols.
- **Level 3** monitors and aims to maintain the improved (or established as satisfactory at Level 1) health status of the herd with regard to the diseases included in the Herdsure® protocols.

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

What are the roles of AHVLA and the veterinary practitioner?

AHVLA provides you with:

- Detailed sampling, testing, interpretation and management protocols for each disease and for each of the three levels within Herdsure®.
- Testing of samples according to the relevant testing protocol.
- Advice on management and biosecurity relevant to the control of each disease within the Herdsure® service. 🔒
- Prompts for testing and, where appropriate, the identification of animals to be tested. 🔔
- Access to a national helpline if further advice is needed.

Your role will be to:

- Identify clients who wish to enrol in Herdsure® and complete a registration form for each.
- Identify management groups within the herd, in relation to the Herdsure® disease protocols.
- Collect samples according to the relevant testing protocol and following reminders by the Herdsure® Management System. 🔔
- Advise your client on how to implement necessary management actions, in accordance with the guidance in the Herdsure® protocols, following the reporting of test results by AHVLA.
- Help your clients to identify and implement changes in biosecurity procedures, in accordance with guidance in the Herdsure® protocols. 🔒

Getting started

Registration of the veterinary practice

Your practice will have registered (using Form A in the 'Forms' section of this handbook) in order to receive this handbook. You need only register once, no matter how many farms you enrol.

What does it cost my practice?

There is no charge for veterinary practices to register for the service.

Enrolling farms

Please enrol farms using Registration Form B included in the 'Forms' section of this handbook. A separate registration should be photocopied and completed for each farm.

Herds participating in other health programmes may be eligible to join a Herdsure® health programme at Level 2 or 3. Requests for consideration of these cases should be made to a Herdsure® consultant, via the Herdsure® helpline, when an appropriate decision will be made based on veterinary criteria.

Some herds may be considering Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) accreditation; for enrolling these refer to the CHeCS section below.

What does it cost the farmer?

A subscription is payable by farms to enrol, renewed annually. It is based on the size of herd and the number of diseases to which they subscribe. Please refer to the section on 'Accessing the service – definition of a registered herd' for the definition of a 'herd' for this purpose. All communications (including invoicing) will be with the registered veterinary practice.

Tests are competitively priced at special rates. For details see www.ahvlascientific.com.

What happens next?

Depending on which disease protocol(s) the farmer has chosen to subscribe to, the relevant protocol(s) will be triggered. Sample requests will be sent to your practice and on occasion, e.g. milk, also to the farmer.

Important: No samples should be submitted before receiving the first notification.

Test results, in the form of a report, will be sent to your practice and will include notification of the next action (which will depend on test results). You will be sent detailed sampling instructions when this action is due.

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.

The report relates to the herd rather than to an individual animal.



Cattle Health Certification Standards – (CHECS)

Herdsure® is licensed by CHECS. Farmers enrolling in Herdsure® have the option to become CHECS-accredited as being free of disease for BVD, IBR, Johne's disease and Leptospirosis.

Your client will be eligible to apply for CHECS accreditation and awarded certificates of health status provided they comply with strict CHECS biosecurity rules. These can be found in the CHECS technical document (www.checs.co.uk).

Completion of Form D following the Appendices should be completed at registration, along with Form B, and should also accompany each sample submission.

Pen Cards

One of the benefits of the Herdsure® Management System is that results are stored for individual animals against their official ear tag numbers. This enables Herdsure® members to request (for a small fee) Pen Cards, a summary of test results for individual animals, prior to sale. Please also note that although animals may be part of a tested herd it does not necessarily follow that they have been tested individually. Should your client wish to apply for these please call the helpline and we will send you an application form. Please note that Herdsure® requires the following notice:

- 6 weeks notice when testing is required
- 2 weeks notice if testing has already been completed

otherwise we cannot guarantee they will be sent on time.