

Dairy UK Position Paper MAP May 2016

Contents

Background	1
Dairy UK Position – for industry and stakeholders	1

Background

Mycobacterium avium subspecies *paratuberculosis* (often abbreviated to MAP), is a bacterium which causes Johne's disease, a contagious and chronic infection that affects primarily the small intestine of cattle, sheep and goats. The main symptoms are diarrhoea and wasting.

The British dairy industry has adopted a cautionary approach and steps have been taken to ensure that MAP does not enter the food supply chain. In the late '90s, research suggesting that longer pasteurisation time is more efficient at killing MAP cells prompted many dairy processing establishments to voluntarily alter their processes to extend pasteurisation time.

The British dairy industry also undertook jointly funded research with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which indicated that pasteurisation is very effective at destroying MAP, and that pasteurisation combined with homogenisation reduced even further the chance of survivors. These days, most commercial pasteurised milk is centrifuged and homogenised. Several international laboratories have also confirmed that commercial pasteurisation is highly effective at killing *M. paratuberculosis* if present in the raw milk.

Cow welfare is of paramount importance to British dairy farmers, who seek to maintain high welfare standards. Johne's disease also has a significant impact on the productivity and fertility of the cow. For this reason, Dairy UK has been actively leading on the Action Johne's Initiative, to raise awareness of the disease amongst farmers and initiate management plans to control its incidence.

The International Dairy Federation has commented that properly validated and operated pasteurisers, along with careful hygiene and packing, will ensure the absence of *M. paratuberculosis* from dairy products, including infant formula.

Dairy UK Position – for industry and stakeholders

No research at present has confirmed that MAP causes disease in humans, including Crohn's disease. The NHS advises that there is no conclusive evidence to suggest a particular diet can cause Crohn's disease. Scientific evidence certainly does not warrant a reduced consumption of milk, which is a rich package of nutrients and contributes to the intake of a wide range of vitamins and minerals in the UK population.