

Dealing with a (Devastating) Deer Disease

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Remember this?



And this? April 2008 Field day...



Subtle warnings...

- Letter from Johnes Management Limited – lesions noted at slaughter in one animal.
- About 500 farmers also got a letter...



July 2008

- Five very poor R2 stags- light +/- scour
 - four homebred
 - one brought-in (different source to April case)
- What would you do?
- Drench them?
- Shoot them?
- Ignore them?



What we did...

- Blood tested all five for Johnes.
- Treated four with drench and copper/B12.
- Post mortem on one looked like Johnes.
- Four strongly positive...
 - three homebred, including postmortem stag.
 - one brought-in stag.





Again, what would you do?

- What would you want to do next?
- What about the two other farms that have supplied Johnes deer to you?
- How would this result affect your policies-selling breeding stock? Fattening offspring?
- Bear in mind that there are 0-3 skin test positive at annual TB test (very low rate) and no other known clinical issues in this herd.

What we did next...

- Post mortem two of those positive spikers: Johnes confirmed.
- Blood test rest of R2 stag mob: 2/30 positive.
- Blood test 11 tail-end R2 hinds and one light MA hind: 2/12 positive includes one more brought in hind (same source).

Where did it come from?

- Some via bought-in deer from at least two sources.
- Dairy beef bulls have been a big part of the Steyning operation.
- Likely source and likely contributor to wide-scale deer exposure?
- Serious warning to those grazing cattle...

Whole herd test or just replacements?

- Test R2 hinds annually and hope to breed out the infection.

Or

- Get stuck in at the start and test the whole herd.

Be brave- you may not like the answer!





2-712

S-406

N-109

A-612

1-22

R-921

L-824

V-305

N-116

R-901

Breeding hinds...

- R2 in-fawn hinds: 15/106 positive
and 2 suspicious.
- MA in-fawn hinds: 42/515 positive
and 12 suspicious.

Ouch! 11% to cull.

Keep them? Cull them? Ignore it now?

Breeding hinds- a plan...

- High positives were killed: lesions only reliably visible in these animals.
- Antibody levels <100 were kept and have fawned apart.
- Hinds will be culled at weaning.
- Fawns will be monitored for weights and disease as part of the project. None to be retained.

Breeding stags- interesting!

- One of two light sires in winter was positive. Killed but no visible lesions.
- Remaining Sire stags all tested- okay.
- All animals identified to their sire by Tim.
- The positive sire “X” left 40% offspring positive/suspicious.
- Other sires typically 0 to <20%.
- All “X” offspring gone or going!

What are the big issues here?

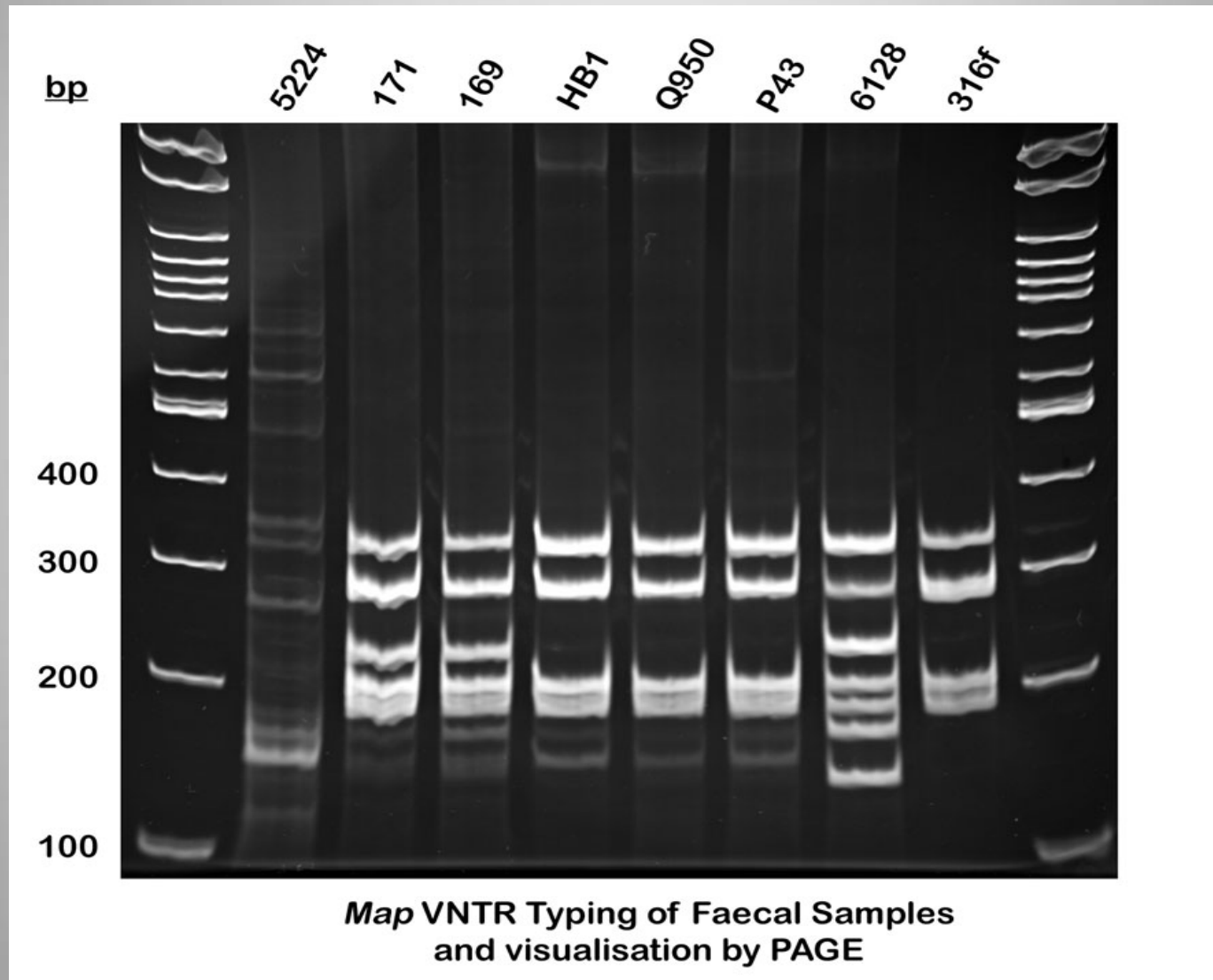
- Clinical losses- not actually very many!
- Potential for a huge problem- many +ve identified.
- Grazing with dairy beef- source of infection?
- Genetics- stag “X” a big contributor.
- Good feeding and low stress meant signs not seen until rising two year old.

Where to from here?

- Annual test of all R2 stock:
 - Retained R2 hinds after scanning
 - Sale R2 hinds
 - Sale stags
- Follow through fawns of positive hinds.
- Farm on with confidence.

- Are you confident about your stock? We have found Johnes in 5/8 herds this spring...

DNA tests- serious science



Costings

- About \$20 per animal including collection and lab costs.
- Total spend here is about \$15000 for a whole herd test.
- **First find your Johnes- then get good advice**

If you...

- graze cattle with deer or on your deer farm...
- especially dairy breeds...
- have light hinds that don't pick up with a drench...
- have yearlings or fawns that fall to bits...
- any scouring deer...

then you need to keep Johnes (and drench resistance) at the top of the list.

Do not ignore it!