

Alpha Mannosidosis – Progress So Far

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Any breeder registering a bull over the last 2+ years will know about our Alpha Mannosidosis testing programme. We first began testing all bulls at inspection/registration at the end of 2022. Since then, over 1000 animals have been tested (1046 to the end of 2024). Of these 23% are carriers of AM. However, because breeders that suspect an AM problem are more likely to test more animals, we expect that the true proportion of carriers across the breed will be less than 23%.

Although testing is only mandatory for newly registered males, just over half the animals tested are female. We expect that these females are more likely to come from herds which suspect an AM problem and results support this – with 25% of females tested being carriers. This is likely to be higher than the true value.

To get a better idea of the size of the problem across the breed, we can just consider males. In particular, we can just look at males born since 2020 to focus on males for whom testing was mandatory. These bulls make up 277 of the total animals tested. **Of these young bulls tested, only 19% were carriers.**

We expect that because all bulls registered since the end of 2022 must be AM free, the overall proportion of carriers in the breed will decrease. If we compare animals born in 2022 compared to 2023, there is some evidence of our strategy working. Of the animals tested, 26% of those born in 2022 were carriers. Whereas for **those born in 2023, only 18% of those tested were carriers.** Next year we expect this number to drop even further as more of our tested clear bulls have calves on the ground.

As a reminder: the only way to have a calf affected by AM is to breed two carriers together. **This means that if your bull is clear, you will not have any calves with deformities due to AM.** Although some breeders may choose to remove carrier females from their herds as well, carrier females are still eligible for registration. We simply recommend that breeders wanting to keep bull calves from these females, test any potential bulls when young to avoid disappointment at registration. This is because each calf from a carrier dam has a 50% chance of also being a carrier.

If you would like to test any animals, particularly potential bulls, please contact the secretary.