



# CellCheck

AnimalHealthIreland.ie



# Briefing Pack

FEBRUARY 2011



Animal Health Ireland, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim

071 96 71928 admin@animalhealthireland.ie www.animalhealthireland.ie



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# 1 Introduction & Rationale

Although Ireland is a relatively small dairy producer in global terms, accounting for less than 1% of world dairy production, the Irish dairy industry has a global reach, with 80% of all dairy production being exported. Over the last two decades, Ireland has become one of the world's leading producers of infant nutritional products; a number of the leading infant nutrition companies are located here and Ireland now supplies in excess of 15% of the global market for infant formula. Ireland is the 4th largest exporter of butter and other milk-derived fats and oils, and the 12th largest exporter of milk, cream and milk products amongst WTO countries. In 2009, the value of exported dairy products and ingredients exceeded €2 billion.

Analysis of all data from milk recording herds between 2003 and 2010 (inclusive) shows that between 11% and 45% of farms had an unadjusted (i.e. seasonality formula not applied) SCC in excess 400,000 cells/ml. Data collated on the sale of intramammary antibiotics in Ireland during 2003-2009 also raise concern over the level of usage. Almost 2 million lactation tubes are used annually, indicative of a clinical case rate approximately three times greater than suggested farm targets.

CellCheck can play an important role in enhancing the quality of raw milk supply in Ireland, thereby improving profitability at producer and processor level and helping to ensure continued, sustainable access to valuable export markets.



## 2

# Objectives

Building Awareness • Delivering Best Practice • Setting Standard Building Capacity

## Building Awareness

A comprehensive communication strategy will introduce CellCheck to all target audiences, raising awareness of the factors contributing to and the problems associated with high SCC, and presenting realistic and achievable solutions to these problems.

### Target audience groups:

1. Service Providers
2. Dairy Farmers
3. Industry
4. Public

## Delivering Best Practice

Building on the programme materials and associated Intellectual Property of the Countdown DownUnder Programme, CellCheck will develop a body of resources, tailored to the needs of various user groups, but consistent between these groups, that is evidence-based and subject to continual evaluation, including external peer review.

Delivery of best practice will be through targeted communications with all users groups, through training seminars and other means, with an emphasis on active learning.



## Setting Standards

As an industry we should strive towards high standards, be it in milk quality, best practice on farm, or the provision of advice. CellCheck will provide a means for the industry to set ambitious but achievable standards for the Somatic Cell Count of the national herd. These standards, which will be agreed following a process of engagement with the industry, will be quantifiable and objectively verifiable.

CellCheck will encourage the achievement of higher standards through the creation of milk quality awards for all suppliers who achieve excellence in their milk production.  
(See section 9)

## Building Capacity

Based on the premise that mastitis is a multifactorial problem, and therefore best addressed by a multidisciplinary approach, CellCheck will develop the capacity of the various service provider groups – vets, Teagasc advisers, dairy co-op milk quality advisers and milking machine technicians – to work collectively to provide solutions and support for dairy farmers.

Following engagement with service providers, CellCheck will also empower farmers to take responsibility for mastitis management on their own farms.



## 3 Project Documentation

### Project Briefing Pack

The purpose of this present document is to provide stakeholders with an introduction to and overview of the CellCheck programme and planning process.

### Programme Initiation Document

This document defines the programme scope and governing parameters, sets out how it will be managed and how success will be measured.

### Business & Operations Plan

The Business and Operations Plan maps the various programme activities and timelines at an operational level.

### Project Management Tools

This is a suite of tools for planning and progress tracking as well as managing risk, quality and finances. Youcomply (Youcomply.com) software will allow the Programme Manager and Director to track compliance with the Business and Operations Plan and to regularly communicate progress to stakeholders.

### Communications Plan

A detailed Communications Plan, drawn up following consultation with partner organisations and communications consultants, sets out the high level communications goals of the programme, and the audiences, channels and communications objectives for each audience. Further information is provided in Section (6) of this document.



## 4 Agreement of Industry Standard

In order to guide the process of change, a clear understanding and articulation of what the dairy industry wants is essential. Over the coming months, AHI will facilitate an industry-wide consultation, aimed at identifying industry's desired standards for the future in relation to SCC and other parameters. Once specific numeric targets have been identified, AHI will consider incorporating a numeric target into the programme name as part of the process of awareness building.

Other key performance indicators will also be developed in areas such as mastitis control, adoption of recommended practices, farm profitability and farmer/service provider engagement.



## 5 Technical Resources

The availability of respected, agreed and consistent technical information is one of the keys to the success of this programme. Currently a wealth of knowledge exists within the dairy industry in relation to mastitis control. There is a need however, to collate this knowledge into a single, independent resource accessible to all.

As with other AHI priority disease areas, a technical working group (TWG) has been formed. The role of the TWG is to collate leading international research, or to agree an expert consensus in the absence of such research. This knowledge will then be transformed into an output that can be used as a basis for a range of consistent, high quality information resources for farmers and service providers. All TWG outputs are verified against peer and best practice review, thereby ensuring that all programme outputs are of the highest international standard, evidence-based and fit for purpose.

Chaired by Professor Simon More of CVERA, this group of experts includes representatives from UCD, veterinary practice, Teagasc, industry and interest groups. The group has commenced on a critical review and adaptation of the Countdown DownUnder technical resource - the Farm Guidelines - which are a collation of agreed science and best practice in relation to mastitis control, containing clear, consistent messages. The Countdown materials represent a tried-and-tested international resource, access to which will allow CellCheck to progress much more rapidly and cost-effectively than would otherwise have been possible. The first working draft of the adapted Farm Guidelines, which will be used as a management and advisory tool for farmers and service providers alike, will be available for 'road testing' in June 2011.



The work of the TWG will also steer the development of ancillary tools for farm use, and advisory purposes. For example:

1. The continued development of milk recording reporting solutions, to provide maximum support and value to the user.
2. The creation of an interactive cost calculator for web / discussion group purposes, which will demonstrate to CellCheck users the value of change and the financial opportunities that exist from improved mastitis control. This will be based on recent Teagasc economic research.
3. The commissioning of social science research, aimed at understanding the drivers of and constraints to the adoption of best practice by dairy farmers. This research will also provide a valuable means of on-going programme evaluation and refinement, as necessary. A steering group has been formed in order to advance this work.

In addition to the above commissioned research, an application has been submitted under the joint FIRM/ RSF initiative for a project to examine the “drivers of and barriers to the improved economic performance of the dairy sector”. The lead institution for the application is the Teagasc Rural Economy and Development Programme, in collaboration with Teagasc Moorepark, NUI (Galway) and AHI. The proposal is to carry out (i) economic analyses of the costs and benefits of best practice and (ii) social science research to identify drivers of and barriers to the adoption of best practice in relation to two case studies: animal health practices and genetic improvements in the dairy herd. Adjudication of proposals is due to take place in the first half of 2011.



## 6 Communications & Awareness

### Communications Strategy

A detailed Communications Plan has been drawn up, setting out the high level communications goals of the programme, and the audiences, channels and communications objectives for each audience.

### Stakeholder Communications

In addition to annual and quarterly formal reports, stakeholders will receive regular (monthly) communications, providing updates on programme planning, activities and outcomes.

### Technical Communications

While creating high quality and consistent technical resources is fundamental to the success of CellCheck, so too is ensuring that the key messages within these resources reach the target audiences. Regular communication with both farmers and service providers is essential in building awareness and confidence, encouraging adoption of best practice and reaching agreed standards. CellCheck material and resources will be disseminated across multiple platforms (print, digital, face-to-face) to maximise reach to all relevant audiences. From March 2011, technical communications will commence in national farming press and will continue on a monthly basis. Regular feeds to service providers and industry will also be established, to enable the inclusion of key messages into business communications, newsletters etc.

### CellCheck Communications Database

A comprehensive and dedicated communications database will optimise information sharing within and between relevant stakeholder groups.



## 7 Phase 1 Delivery

Phase 1 roll-out is the first stage in direct delivery of the CellCheck resources to the ultimate end users – service providers and dairy farmers. The objectives of this delivery approach are:

- To continue building awareness around best practice in mastitis management;
- To introduce the technical resource to the end users;
- To create networks of local professionals to support farmers in mastitis problem-solving;
- To facilitate future engagement between farmers and service providers in disease management.

This process will also enable the continuing refinement of programme materials and delivery methods prior to full national roll-out.

Working with existing structures, such as farmer discussion groups, CellCheck will deliver education and training sessions, based on the output from the TWG, directly to farmer audiences. The sessions will be hosted by local service providers (farm advisors, vets, and/or milking machine technicians), working in partnership.

A working group of representatives from the involved parties will be established in March 2011. They will agree on the detail and logistics of this phase, which will commence in June 2011, by which time the first working draft of the TWG output will have been completed. It is envisaged that Phase 1 will target approximately 500 farmers over a three month period, followed by evaluation.



## 8 Building Service Provider Capability

Local service providers will play a key role in building awareness and providing high quality information and mastitis management solutions. Through their working relationships with farmers, they are in a unique position to advise, inform and encourage adoption of best practice on farms.

AHI is currently working on building a comprehensive service provider database, which will allow for the development of the necessary interdisciplinary teams and facilitate the continued dissemination of key technical messages throughout 2011. Road shows and/or training seminars, to be held in Autumn 2011, will increase regional technical capacity and amplify the reach of the programme.



## 9 Milk Quality Awards

The introduction of CellCheck Milk Quality Awards is an ideal opportunity to acknowledge and recognise the excellence of Irish farmers that are currently achieving very high standards of milk quality on farm. It also provides a goal for others to aim for in the future.

As an example, the Countdown Downunder Milk Quality Awards were awarded annually to the top 5% of suppliers in Australia, based on annual SCC levels. The awards, based on processor supply data, were awarded on a regional basis and came to represent a powerful motivating factor for Australian dairy farmers.

With the support of the industry, a similar model could be replicated in Ireland. A proposal for these awards, to be drawn up by March 2011, will consider the logistics involved, including the data required and possible sources of sponsorship/funding.

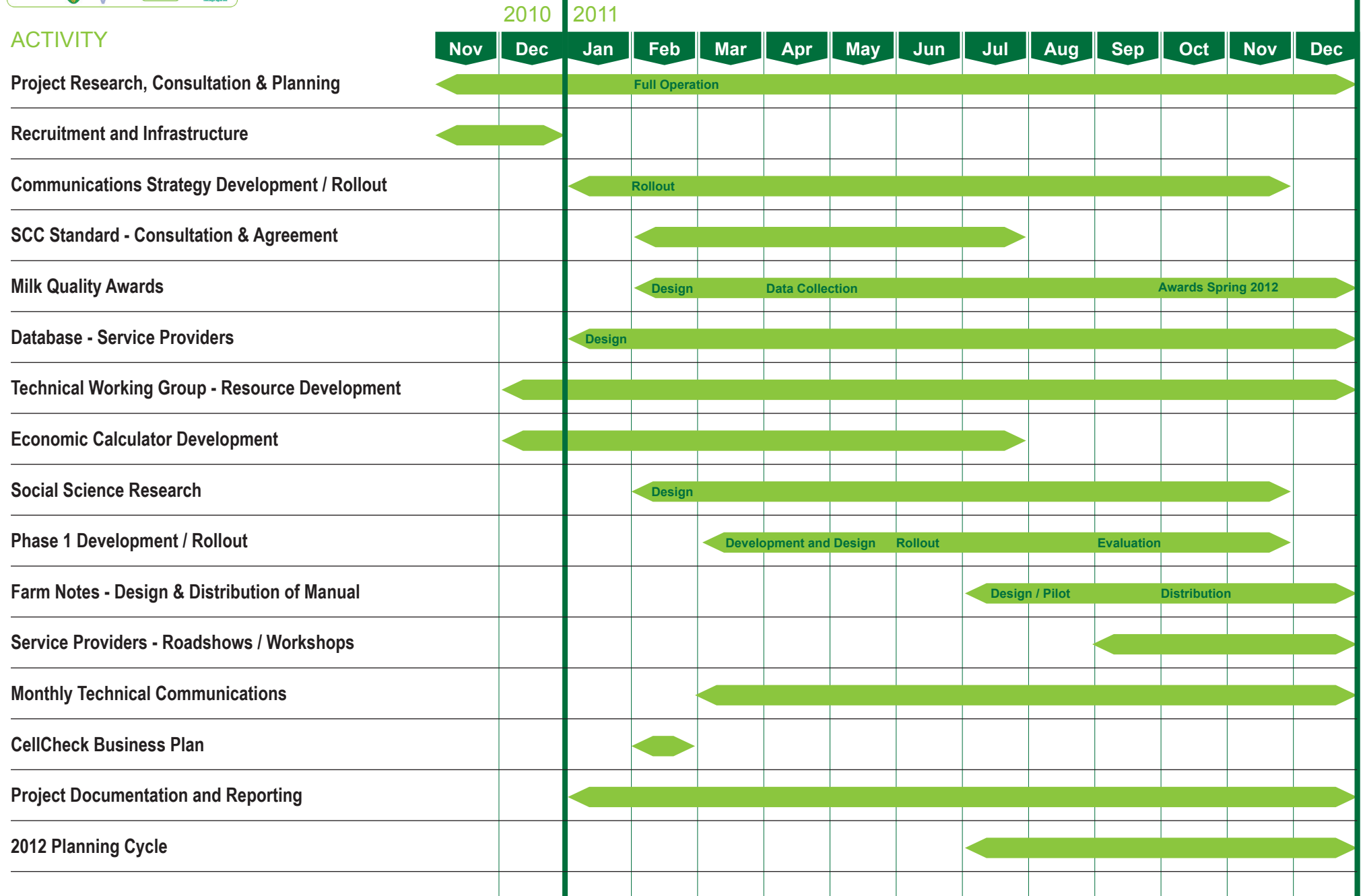


## 10 Evaluation

Regular, active and transparent reviews, based on objective and independently verifiable key performance indicators, agreed in conjunction with the industry, will be used to assess the effectiveness of the programme.



ACTIVITY





**Steering Group**  
AHI • DAFF • VET IRL • UCD • ICBF • TEAGASC • IDB

**Programme Director**  
CEO • Joe O’Flaherty

**Programme Manager**  
Finola McCoy

**Planning & Operations Manager**  
Karol Harvey

**Solution Development**

**Economic & Social Value**

**Communication & Stakeholder Management**

Technical Working Group

Industry Consultation Group

