

**Animal Research Programme – Animal Health and Well-being**  
**RMIS NO. 5900**

**Title:** Investigation of prevalence, risk factors and preventative measures, of non-regulated infectious diseases in Irish dairy herds.

***Abstract***

With over 50% of Irish dairy farmers intending to expand their enterprise, it has now become essential to maximise efficiency on Irish dairy farms. Sub-optimal herd health, and more specifically infectious diseases, can seriously impact production efficiency and sustainability. The aim of this project therefore, is to complete an investigation of non-regulatory infectious diseases on Irish dairy farms, their prevalence and impact, and to collect the necessary data to generate a template for farm-specific health statements, which can be used for on-farm health planning and for trade purposes. The investigation will integrate an examination of biosecurity practices currently in place on Irish dairy farms (to include an investigation of pharmacological disease control) and determination of the seroprevalence of at least three economically relevant non-regulatory diseases, namely, bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and leptospirosis. Johnes disease, salmonellosis, neosporosis, Mortellaro's digital dermatitis and *Mycoplasma bovis* may also be included in the investigation. Seroprevalence and control of parasitic disease relevant to dairy farms i.e. ostertagiosis, dictyocaulosis and fascioliosis will also be carried out. A combination of survey methodologies and farm visits will be used to collect data and sample matrices (bulk milk, blood, ear tissue) necessary to complete the investigation. This project will definitively highlight the non-regulatory infectious diseases requiring prioritisation in Ireland based on prevalence and economic impact data. In terms of on-farm health planning, it should result in an increased awareness and implementation of biosecurity, continuous disease monitoring, appropriate vaccination, and farm-specific health statements on Irish dairy farms. The baseline data generated in this study will act as a benchmark from which the impact of future herd health strategies and their contribution towards sustainable dairy farming can be measured.

***Project Leader :*** Riona Sayers

***Start Date :*** 02/01/2009

***Expected Finish Date :*** 31/12/2011