



# California Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program

Information for Dairy and Beef Cattle Producers  
December 2002



**What is Johne's disease?** Johne's disease is caused by a bacterium (*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*) that infects the intestinal tract of ruminants. Cattle are usually infected as calves but do not show clinical signs until three or more years of age. The disease develops slowly and eventually kills the infected animal. There is no effective treatment. Cattle with advanced Johne's disease have chronic diarrhea and continually lose weight despite having good appetites.

### How does Johne's disease affect the cattle industry?

A 2000 study of the California dairy industry reported that more than 60% of the dairies tested were infected with Johne's disease at low levels. A 1997 study of the U.S. beef industry reported that about 8% of beef cattle herds in the U.S. were infected.

### Are there human health consequences?

*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* has been isolated from some people with Crohn's disease, a chronic bowel condition of people. However, a link between Johne's disease and Crohn's disease has not been established.

### What is the California Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program?

A Johne's disease advisory committee was formed in 1999 to evaluate Johne's disease in California, and, if necessary, develop a disease control plan. Representatives from the beef and dairy industries, academia, private practitioners, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) participate in this ongoing committee. This group developed the voluntary Johne's disease control program.

### What are the phases of the control program?

1. Education of beef and dairy producers.
2. Herd-specific management plans to control disease.
3. Testing to classify herds.

Certification is available at each phase of the program. The California Dairy Quality Assurance Program and the California Cattlemen's Association keep lists of dairy and beef producers, respectively, who have completed each phase.

**How do you begin the program?** Producers may complete the education phase by attending a class taught by a Johne's disease certified veterinarian. Watch for announcements of upcoming classes in trade journals, extension newsletters and other sources.

**How do you start the second phase?** Producers must complete the first phase, then work with a certified veterinarian to do a risk assessment and develop a herd plan to control Johne's disease in their herd.

**How do you start the third phase?** You must first complete the education phase and use a herd management plan to control Johne's disease. The third phase has specific requirements and strategies for test-negative herds and for test-positive herds. The Johne's disease prevalence (percent of positive cattle) and length of time at a given category determine the status of test-positive herds. The herd status improves as the disease prevalence is reduced.

### What are Johne's disease certified veterinarians?

Veterinarians who have completed Johne's disease certification training. They can offer education classes, assist in developing herd plans, and help you in the classification phase of this program. Lists of trained veterinarians are available from CDFA at the numbers listed below.

### For more information, contact:

#### CDFA-Animal Health Branch offices:

Redding	(530) 225-2140
Modesto	(209) 491-9350
Tulare	(559) 685-3500
Ontario	(909) 947-4462
Sacramento (HQ)	(916) 654-1447
Web site	www.cdfa.ca.gov

### California Dairy Quality Assurance Program:

info@cdqap.org (530) 752-7507

**California Cattlemen's Association** (916) 444-0845

**California Farm Bureau** (916) 561-5610

**USDA-Veterinary Services** (916) 854-3900