



California Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program

Information for Dairy and Beef Cattle Producers
May 2004



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.

California's Voluntary 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 on-going committee. This group developed the voluntary Johne's disease control program, which is part of the comprehensive National Johne's disease control effort.

The program identifies herds that are a low risk for Johne's. These low-risk herds can become a source of replacement animals for producers. The three phases of the Johne's program are education, management and classification. All three aspects involve producer and veterinarian cooperation. Certification is available for successful completion of each component.

We encourage all producers to participate in the voluntary Johne's control program. This is a voluntary program - you determine the extent of your participation. Signing up for the program does not commit you to completing all phases; you can go as far as you wish.

Johne's Disease Certified Veterinarians:

Any veterinarian who has completed a Johne's disease certification training is a Johne's certified veterinarian. They can offer education classes, assist in developing herd plans, and help with the classification phase of this program. Currently, 142 veterinarians have completed the Johne's Certification. Lists of the trained veterinarians are available from CDFA, California Cattlemen's Association and California Dairy Quality Assurance Program at the numbers listed below.

For more information, contact:

CA Dairy Quality Assurance Program (530) 752-7507
CA Cattlemen's Association (916) 444-0845
CA Farm Bureau (916) 561-5610
USDA-Veterinary Services (916) 854-3900

Educational Component: Phase 1

Producers and allied industry members complete the educational phase by attending a class taught by a Johne's disease certified veterinarian. Upcoming classes are announced in trade journals, extension newsletters and other sources. The California Dairy Quality Assurance Program and the California Cattlemen's Association keep lists of dairy and beef producers, respectively, who have completed this phase. To date, 20 beef producers and 80 dairy producers have successfully completed the educational component.

Management Component: Phase 2

Herd assessments are performed by Johne's certified veterinarians to evaluate current management and biosecurity practices. The evaluation is based on the risk of transmitting the Johne's organism. Emphasis is placed on:

- ◆ Calf Management
- ◆ Replacement Management
- ◆ Biosecurity
- ◆ Method of culling positive cows.

A management plan is developed based on the assessment.

Herd Classification Component: Phase 3

The final component of the Johne's voluntary disease control program involves herd classification. There are four herd status levels. The Johne's disease prevalence (percent 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. Herd prevalence is determined by testing a statistically significant proportion of the herd.

Testing For Johne's Disease:

Diagnostic testing is a tool to help producers make decisions and reach their goals for the prevention and control of Johne's disease in their herds. The Johne's certified veterinarian and producer will determine which test will achieve targeted disease control. No single test is sufficient for all purposes, but reasonably accurate and cost-effective tests are available. Two types of tests routinely used for Johne's disease:

- ◆ Tests that measure antibodies in serum: e.g., ELISA
- ◆ Tests that find the organism in manure: e.g., culture

CDFA Animal Health Branch Offices	
Sacramento (HQ)	916-654-1447
Modesto	209-491-9350
Ontario	909-947-4462
Redding	530-225-2140
Tulare	559-685-3500