



# California Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program

Information for Dairy and Beef Cattle Producers  
October 2006



## 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 State Johne's disease advisory committee was formed in 1999. 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 (VJDCP), which is part of the comprehensive National Johne's disease control effort.

The three phases of the VJDCP are, in order: education, management, and classification (testing). Formal completion of any or all of these phases requires the cooperation of the producer and a Johne's certified veterinarian. Herd Certification is available for successful completion of each component.

### 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, over 200 producers and other industry individuals have successfully completed the educational component.

### Management Component: Phase 2

A Johne's certified veterinarian administers a herd risk assessment to evaluate current management and bio-security practices on a farm. The evaluation is based on the risk of transmitting the Johne's organism. Emphasis is placed on:

- ◆ Calf Management
- ◆ Replacement Management
- ◆ Biosecurity

A management plan is developed to reduce the risks of spreading Johne's disease. Currently, 42 beef producers and 33 dairy producers are at this level in the program.

## Herd Classification Component: Phase 3

The final phase of the Johne's voluntary disease control program involves herd testing. Herds are considered test-negative or test-positive, and go into one of four levels within each classification. The Johne's certified veterinarian assists and suggests whether it is worth pursuing for the particular herd goals. Currently, there are 5 beef producers at this level in the program. All are test-negative and 1 herd has reached the highest level (Level 4) of the program.

**We encourage all producers to participate in the Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program.** In this voluntary program you determine the extent of your participation. Signing up does not commit you to completing all phases; you go as far as you wish.

## Testing For Johne's Disease:

Diagnostic testing is a tool to help producers and veterinarians make decisions on how to prevent and control Johne's disease in their herds. The Johne's certified veterinarian and producer determine which tests achieve targeted disease control. Two types of tests routinely used for Johne's disease in California are:

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

## 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, perform risk assessments/assist in developing herd plans, and help with the classification phase of the VJDCP. 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) 857-6170**

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