



# Fee-Based Johne's Disease Control Program for Private Practitioners

By Dr. Randy Anderson, DVM, MPVM, Johne's Disease State Coordinator

**J**ohne's disease is a chronic granulomatous enteritis of ruminants caused by the acid fast, slow growing bacterium *Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis*. Typically, cattle are infected as calves but do not show clinical signs until three or more years of age. Cattle with advanced Johne's disease have chronic diarrhea and continually lose weight despite having good appetites. There is no effective treatment.

Estimate of the cost of Johne's disease in the U.S. dairy industry range from \$43 to in excess of \$200 per cow in the herd, depending on herd prevalence and other factors. In two separate studies of randomly selected dairy herds in California, more than 60 percent of dairies tested had at least one cow test positive, and more than 35 percent had two or more test positive for antibodies to *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*. Additionally, the studies revealed approximately 4 percent of dairy cattle tested were positive. In beef cattle, it has been estimated that approximately 8 percent of beef herds and 0.4 percent of beef cattle are test-positive.

In 1999, California formed a Johne's Disease Advisory Committee to evaluate Johne's disease in California and 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 U.S. Department of Agriculture participate in this ongoing committee. The group developed the voluntary Johne's disease control program, which is part of the comprehensive national Johne's disease control effort. The three phases of the Johne's program are education, management, and classification. All three aspects involve producer and veterinarian co-

operation. Certification is available for successful completion of each component.

For the third year, California has received financial assistance for its Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program (VJDCP) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The funds are available to Johne's Program Certified Veterinarians (currently there are 200 Johne's certified veterinarians in California) to educate producers, administer risk assessments (RA), and develop herd management plans (HP). The program goals are to increase awareness of Johne's disease in cattle producers in the state, to encourage these producers to have a risk assessment performed on their herd, and to develop a herd plan to address those risks.

During the first year of the program, 49 risk assessments and herd plans performed by 12 certified veterinarians were approved. The allotted budget for that year would have funded RA/HP on 300 herds. Due to lack of interest, the cooperative agreement for the next year was amended to decrease the number of herds but increase veterinary incentives. Last year, 25 of the original 49 herds renewed their RA/HP, and 17 new herds were enrolled in the program. The funding for last year has been extended to fund new RA/HP

for the current year. Additionally, added funding has been obtained to renew RA/HP for the current year. The proposed plan for the current year is as follows:

## For New Herds Enrolled in the Program:

Each Johne's Program Certified Veterinarian will receive \$500 for completing the following:

1. Administer the education component to the producer.
2. Perform a risk assessment on the herd.
3. Develop herd management plan to prioritize and address the risks identified in the risk assessment.

In addition, the California Animal Health and Food Safety Service Laboratory has received funding from USDA to perform screening tests (ELISA) on randomly selected cows 3 years of age or older on each of the herds in this program. The number of cows to be sampled will be determined by the certified veterinarian and the Designated Johne's Disease Coordinator. Fecal samples will also be cultured from cows that test positive on the blood test, at no cost to the producer.

## For Herds Enrolled Previous Years — Annual Renewal:

Each Johne's Program Certified Veterinarian will receive \$400 for completing 2-3 above (the educational component is not required for annual renewal).

You may contact Dr. Randy Anderson, California Johne's Disease Coordinator, at 209.988.1421 with questions about the Voluntary Johne's Disease Control Program.

For more information, check the CDFA website at [www.cdfa.ca.gov](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov) or contact the CDFA District Office in your area.

## CDFA Animal Health Branch Offices

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