



# CEDAR GROVE VETERINARY SERVICE NEWSLETTER



MARCH 2018

## JOHNE'S DISEASE: ALL THE INFO YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW BUT WERE TOO AFRAID TO ASK

"This cow has Johne's disease, you might as well just ship her." This might be a phrase your veterinarian has said to you in the past year. Due to the veterinarian's expertise, you accepted their assessment of the cow and the situation. But are there things you have always wanted to ask about Johne's disease and never did? The goal of this article is to go over the basics of Johne's disease so you can become more informed and enact measures to reduce this chronic, infectious disease in your herd in the future.

### What is Johne's disease?

Johne's disease is a disease caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium avium*. This bacterium is a distant relative of the bacteria that causes tuberculosis in humans, even though it does NOT cause tuberculosis in cattle.

**What are the signs that an animal might have Johne's disease?** The first thing to

understand about Johne's disease is that it is a slow infection. It may take years for an animal that has been infected to show any outward signs of illness. Many animals are infected as calves, but don't show signs until 3-4 years of age. Usually a stressful event such as a DA surgery or calving will trigger outward signs of infection. The first indications of infection are a long-lasting diarrhea and progressive weight loss despite the cow having a good appetite. Some animals may start to decrease in milk production and become weak due to malnourishment late in the disease state. Often, the diarrhea can be confused with other disease such as indigestion or salmonella.

**How prevalent is Johne's disease in the US?** A study from 2007, indicates that 68.1% of dairy operations in the US are infected with *Mycobacterium avium*, with 25% of the total herds having what would be classified as a high percentage of Johne's infected cows. Research also indicates that finding one cow that is showing signs of Johne's

### Fun Fact

Did you know that March 20<sup>th</sup> in National Ag Day!! Make sure to celebrate with your favorite ag product.

## TEST YOUR DAIRY FARMING KNOWLEDGE

- 1) If Wisconsin were its own country, where would it rank in the world in terms of cheese production?
  - a) 4th
  - b) 12th
  - c) 1st
  - d) 6th
- 2) In 2018, the number of heifer replacements have reached an all-time high. How many heifers are there in the US for every 100 milk cows?
  - a) 14
  - b) 51
  - c) 75
  - d) 37
- 3) Which of the following groups spends the most on dairy products according to the USDA?
  - a) Millennials
  - b) Generation X
  - c) Baby Boomers
  - d) Traditionalists

Answers on back

disease in a herd of 100 cows means that there are likely 25 other herd mates that are infected but not showing signs. Overall, this data indicates that Johne's disease is present in many herds and is a risk for most dairy producers.

**Is Johne's disease**

**treatable?** Most current studies indicate that Johne's disease is probably not curable. Clinical signs can be reduced, but since that is only achieved with large doses of multiple antibiotics for a year or longer, it is not usually economically feasible.

**How do animals become infected?** Infected animals shed the bacteria in their manure. Animals become infected when they consume feed/water that becomes contaminated with the infected manure. The risk of an infected animal spreading the disease increases as they become older or start to show signs of the disease.

**What animals are the most susceptible to Johne's disease?** Animals are most susceptible to infection in their first year of life. Newborns and young animals can ingest manure from teats or colostrum that has been infected with the bacteria.

**How long can Mycobacterium avium survive**

**in the environment?** The bacteria can survive as viable and infectious for up to 9 months in manure pits, 11 months in the soil, and 17 months in water.

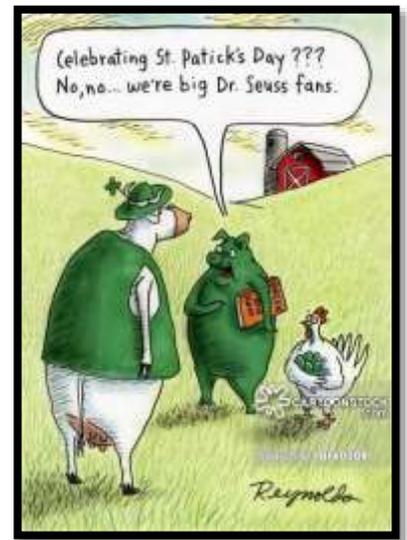
**How can a farmer help to control Johne's disease in their herd?**

- Calves should be born in a clean environment
- Keep newborns away from adult animals and manure from adult animals
- Avoid contamination of water and feed sources with manure
- Use colostrum from Johne's negative animals
- Do not pool colostrum and collect colostrum as cleanly as possible
- If a pasture becomes contaminated with manure, it should be tilled or not used for grazing for one year
- If testing animals, identify all animals that are positive for Johne's disease. Make sure to separate positive animals from their calves immediately after birth
- Try to purchase cattle from low-risk herds

**What testing procedures are recommended for dairy producers?** Johne's disease should be viewed as a herd problem rather than an individual animal disease.

Testing is approached in the same mindset with strategies involving testing the herd and not just a suspect animal. The testing strategies that work best for each herd should be discussed with a veterinarian. No single test will find all infected animals, but certain strategies will identify those most at-risk and most at-risk to spread disease.

Unfortunately, there is not an easy answer to solve a Johne's disease problem on a farm. However, understanding the disease and the risks is the first step to better controlling the disease. Make sure to work with your veterinarian to keep from becoming one of the high-risk herds for Johne's disease.



**Opportunities Still Exist for Barn Cat Spays/Neuters at Cedar Grove Veterinary Services**

There are still funds available at the clinic for our barn cat spay and neuter program. If you have any farm cats that you need to have spayed and neutered, you will need to contact the clinic to schedule an appointment. Again, this program will only be available until the money in the fund runs out. Don't miss out!

**Dairy Farm Knowledge**

**Answers**

**1: A 2: B 3: C**

