

## **Johne's Disease - Who can afford a \$227 loss per cow?**

Johne's disease, pronounced Yo-knees, was identified more than a century ago, yet remains a common and sometimes costly infectious disease of dairy cattle. The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) Dairy '96 Study found that, in infected herds where at least 10% of the cull cows showed clinical signs like those of Johne's-like clinical signs, the average cost to the producer was \$227 for each cow in the herd per year (USDA-APHIS-VS, 1997). Yet the same study estimates that almost half of U.S. dairy producers are unfamiliar with Johne's disease: About 35% of dairy producers recognized the the disease by name and about 10% had never heard of it.

### **Figure 1: Dairy Producer Familiarity with Johne's Disease**

Despite this lack of knowledge, the results of the Dairy '96 initiative combined with more detailed economic studies of particular regions estimate that Johne's disease costs the U.S. dairy industry 200 million dollars annually. The cost for a 100 cow dairy with 10% of cull cows showing signs of Johne's disease would be about \$23,000 each year. The majority of this loss was due to reduced milk production.

The time is past when we could think of the major impact of Johne's disease as an occasional cow with diarrhea that could be culled and forgotten. Johne's disease is a herd problem that worsens with time, reducing production and profit. It may even come under scrutiny as a risk to human health.

We believe that all dairy producers should learn about this disease and ask themselves the following questions:

Is Johne's disease important to me?  
How can I identify Johne's disease in my herd?  
If I find it, what should I do?

To aid you in this process we intend to provide further information on various Johne's disease considerations. This initiative will be in the form of multiple articles, seminars and/or an inclusive pamphlet, depending on your interest and national directives. A general informational article featuring pertinent results from the Dairy '96 study is found in the insert of this issue. Please stay abreast of this disease, one of growing concern in Colorado and the nation.