

JD Testing and Reporting

There are two types of tests performed to diagnose Johne's Disease. Fecal culture is the official test recognized by the federal government. Cows with positive fecal results are actively shedding the organism in their feces and are considered positive for JD. These cows must be reported to the State Veterinarian but there is no subsequent individual or herd quarantine.

The serum ELISA test identifies antibodies to the disease-causing organism in the cow's serum. Presence of serum antibodies does not mean that the cow is actively shedding the organism in the feces; however, there is a relationship between the quantity of serum antibodies and the likelihood of fecal shedding. Thus, ELISA serum test results are not reported as simply positive or negative. The reporting format for ELISA serum test results has been completely revised to enhance their usefulness to producers for making herd management decisions. The result of the test is a number called the "S/P ratio". This number provides the antibody response of the tested animal compared with that of highly positive, known infected control animals. The current report from the CSU Diagnostic Lab provides the S/P ratio result, with an interpretation of negative, suspect, or low/high positive. The value of this method of reporting is that it identifies for the producer those animals with greater or lesser degrees of response to the organism that causes JD. The higher an individual cow's response to the test the greater the likelihood she is shedding significant numbers of infectious organisms, and the greater the threat she represents for spreading disease in the herd. It remains important to double-check at least some percentage of serum results with confirmatory fecal culture testing and some necropsies.