

Colorado Voluntary Bovine Johne's Disease Control Program

What is the Colorado Voluntary Bovine Johne's Control Program?

The Colorado Johne's Advisory Committee was formed in 1998 to address the problem of Johne's disease in the Colorado livestock industry. Members of the livestock community consulted with university and state officials for assistance in developing the Program. After three years of development, the committee finalized plans for the Voluntary Bovine Johne's Disease Control Program in Colorado. The program was modeled after the recommendations of the National Johne's Working Group, which is comprised of Johne's Disease experts from around the country. The unique aspect of the Program is that it is completely voluntary so that a producer can complete as much or as little of the Program as they desire.

What are the advantages of the Program?

As a producer, the Program will educate you about Johne's disease and give management recommendations for your herd. There are also economic benefits to having a Johne's test negative herd, decreasing the prevalence of the disease in your herd, and preventing the introduction of the disease into your herd.

What are the disadvantages of not participating?

The only disadvantage is that you are not taking a proactive approach to the disease in your herd. Many herds don't have Johne's Disease, but can acquire it through replacements. You can decrease the chance of purchasing Johne's infected cattle by becoming more informed and implementing management procedures to reduce the risk.

Who oversees the Program?

Dr. Ron Ackerman, the Assistant Colorado State veterinarian is the Designated Johne's Disease Coordinator (DJC). He is responsible for the training of Certified Johne's Veterinarians (CJV) who will work directly with your herd. The DJC and CJV have additional training in Johne's disease epidemiology and development of herd management plans.

What does the Program entail?

The program consists of three components; Education, Management and Testing. Many Colorado dairy producers have already started the education portion of the program through seminars and reading articles on Johne's disease. Education about the disease allows producers to understand the reasoning behind the detailed management recommendations given in the second component. The management component uses specific farm characteristics in making control and prevention recommendations. Some producers will want to become involved in the third aspect of the program, testing. Testing is not required to participate in the Program, and producers can still test animals "outside" of the Program while involved in the other two aspects. Again, the program is voluntary and producers can participate in as much or as little of the Program as they desire.

1. EDUCATION: The first component and foundation of the Program involves education about Johne's Disease. This serves as the entry level for producer participation into the Program. Education can take place through group workshops or one-on-one sessions with a Certified Johne's Veterinarian.

2. MANAGEMENT: Producers who have completed the Education component may wish to participate in the management component. Performing a Johne's Disease risk assessment and designing an overall herd plan are two important aspects of the management component. A risk assessment identifies management factors associated with an increased risk of spreading the disease. The CJV will help producers develop a herd management plan based on the risk assessment. In addition to the herd specific portion of the management plan, minimum biosecurity measures are part of the overall plan. Producers can incorporate these measures into their management practices and overall herd plan. **The management plan is the most important aspect of Johne's Disease control and prevention.**

3. HERD TESTING AND CLASSIFICATION: The third element of the program is designed to separate test-positive and test-negative herds, based on the results of animal testing. Herds will continue to undergo risk assessments and fine-tuning of the management plan during testing. After initial testing, herds may elect to participate in either the test-positive or test-negative component depending on the presence or absence of test positive animals.

What if I don't want to test my herd?

The program does not require testing to participate. The Program is structured so every dairy producer can participate without testing. The education and management components are important aspects that should involve all dairy producers. Testing of animals "outside" the program allows producers to continue to monitor and control the disease without being classified as a "High Risk" farm. Testing samples outside the Program may also be submitted under your veterinarians' name to protect herd identity.

What types of test can be used for Johne's testing?

The two main types of tests used are the ELISA blood test, which is a screening test and the fecal culture, which is considered an official test. Animals that test positive with the ELISA should be confirmed positive with the fecal culture. Fecal culture positive animals are considered infected and should be managed to eliminate exposure to other animals, or be culled. Federal regulations restrict interstate (between state) movement of fecal culture positive cattle.

What animals should be tested for Johne's Disease?

Animals eligible for testing are cows greater than 3 years of age (>1st lactation) and bulls over 2 years of age. A total of 30 animals are tested with the ELISA blood test on the initial screening. If your herd has less than 30 animals in these age ranges, you must include enough animals in their 1st lactation to satisfy the minimum of 30 test animals, or your complete herd. Samples must be submitted to an approved NVSL lab. Colorado State University's Diagnostic Laboratory is an approved lab.

What happens if all animals test negative?

Test Negative herds can enter the Herd Status Program – Standard track. Annual testing moves these herds (assuming they maintain a test-negative herd) from a Status 1 to a Status 4. Status 4 herds have been tested four times in three years without any positive animals.

What happens if a number of animals test positive?

Test-Positive herds enter the Preventive Management Program. Based on herd prevalence, the herd is assigned a score of A or D. Subsequent testing can improve the score and herds testing negative at later dates can enter the Herd Status level if all cows are negative.

Can Johne's vaccinated animals be tested for Johne's Disease?

Vaccinated animals can only be tested by an official organism detection test. The blood ELISA test will routinely be positive on vaccinated cattle.

How do I maintain or improve my herd status?

Herd Status Levels must be renewed within 14 months of the original or last testing period. Failure to do so will move herds back down to the management level to review the herd plan and risk assessment prior to retesting. Herds will be reclassified according to the most recent herd test.