

Assessing Your Johnes Disease Risk

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First, accept the reality that Johnes Disease does exist in California livestock. It's a fact. The health and economic impact of Johnes Disease is probably much less in California than in the Midwest or eastern dairy herd. Never the less, there is some impact. There are two steps that each California dairyman should take regarding Johnes Disease. The initial step is to become well informed about Johnes and the follow-up step is to have your veterinarian do a Johnes risk assessment for your dairy.

Over 150 California veterinarians have been trained and certified by CDFA and USDA veterinary medical officers using educational materials developed by the California Johnes Disease Advisory Committee, a module in the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program. These veterinarians have the interest, know-how and materials to provide you with the latest information on prevention and control of Johnes Disease. The information in the educational phase of the California Johnes Control Program is California-specific and can be readily applied to your dairy. Contact your local veterinarian to arrange for a presentation in your area.

Once you have completed the educational phase of the California Johnes Control Program, you will have the knowledge necessary to proceed to have a risk assessment done by your veterinarian. This assessment will cover all areas of Johnes Disease. When finished, you and your veterinarian will know the strong and weak points for prevention and control of Johnes specifically for your dairy. Based on the assessment, you can begin to improve those areas revealed by the assessment that will have the greatest impact on Johnes Disease on your dairy. You can also have your risk assessment reviewed by the California Johnes Disease Epidemiologist, Dr. Randy Anderson. He can be contacted at the Modesto, CDFA Animal Health Branch at 209-491-9350.

Dr. Anderson also has a list of veterinarians that have completed the Johnes Disease certification program. You can contact Dr. Anderson to get the names of certified veterinarians in your area.

You may not feel that Johnes Disease has an important impact on your dairy at this time. However, if you continue to avoid the issue, you may be allowing a relatively silent, but destructive disease to creep through your herd. Begin now by becoming knowledgeable about Johnes Disease followed by completing the herd assessment. These steps could prevent a serious disease outbreak on your dairy in the future. You have seen the oil change ad on TV...pay me now; or pay me later! It is strongly suggested that you pay a little now to prevent paying a lot later. This philosophy also applies to Johnes Disease. Check it out with your veterinarian.....now.

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