

IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN JOHNE'S DISEASE AND CROHN'S DISEASE IN HUMANS?

If there is a link between Johne's disease (JD) and Crohn's disease (CD), it hasn't been proven, says Johne's disease expert Mike Collins, DVM, PhD, University of Wisconsin.

What has been scientifically proven about the relationship between these two diseases, according to Collins, is:

- *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* (MAP) causes JD.
- MAP contaminates food of animal-origin; primarily milk and meat.
- JD resembles Crohn's disease in pathology, epidemiology and clinical signs.
- MAP is consistently found in people with CD.

"The only remaining question is whether MAP causes CD or whether CD patients merely become infected with MAP after they have their disease," Collins says.

A report issued in August by the American Academy for Microbiology highlighted that group's concern that MAP may cause Crohn's disease. The

report states that "people with Crohn's disease are seven-fold more likely to have in their gut tissues the bacterium that causes a digestive-tract disease in cattle called Johne's Disease. The role this bacterium may or may not play in causing CD is a top research priority."

The report — *Mycobacterium avium paratuberculosis: Incidental Human Pathogen or Public Health Threat?* — summarizes conclusions and recommendations from a colloquium convened by the American Academy of Microbiology in June 2007. That conference brought together experts in microbiology, medicine, veterinary pathology, epidemiology, infectious diseases and food safety.

A full copy of the report can be found at: <http://www.asm.org/Academy/index.asp?bid=60057>.

Collins says this report doesn't come down with a firm conclusion saying, "yes" or "no," but, "it brings a lot of attention to the issue." 