They tackled Johne’s head-on

This farm decided to take on Johne’s and reduce its grip on their herd . . . and it worked in a big way.

by Sarah Jackson

One month, your best cow may look as healthy as can be. The next, she may be down in milk and quickly losing weight, although she continues to eat plenty. What is going on here? Very likely a blood test will show that this cow has Johne’s disease. What is it? Johne’s disease is a long-term bacterial infection that can cause chronic disease in dairy cattle. The disease is caused by the bacteria Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis (MAP). The bacteria are spread through the environment, and infected cows can shed the bacteria in their milk, urine, and feces. The bacteria can also be transferred through the environment, and infected cows can shed the bacteria in their milk, urine, and feces.

When to test

Cows are tested for Johne’s disease at least once a year. This test is usually performed at the end of the dry period, after the cow has been castrated and before it is returned to the milking herd. The test is done to identify any cows that may have Johne’s disease and to determine if the herd has a high prevalence of the disease.

How to test

The test for Johne’s disease is called the ELISA test (Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay). The test involves collecting a blood sample from the cow and testing it for the presence of antibodies to the bacteria. Antibodies are produced in response to infection with the bacteria, and their presence indicates that the cow has been exposed to the bacteria. The test is done on a regular basis to monitor the prevalence of the disease in the herd.

The test results

The test results are usually reported as “negative,” “positive,” or “strong positive.” A negative result indicates that the cow has not been exposed to the bacteria. A positive result indicates that the cow has been exposed to the bacteria, but not necessarily that it has the disease. A strong positive result indicates that the cow has the disease.

What to do

If a cow tests positive for Johne’s disease, the cow should be removed from the milking herd and kept in a separate, uncontaminated area. The cow should be tested again in a few weeks to see if the test result is still positive. If the test result is still positive, the cow should be culled from the herd. If the test result is negative, the cow can be returned to the milking herd.

In conclusion

Johne’s disease is a chronic, low-grade, and progressive disease that can cause significant losses in milk production and overall herd health. By testing for Johne’s disease and taking appropriate action, the herd can be kept healthy and productive.

References


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