

## Lack of harmonization threatens Johne's-control efforts



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When looking for replacement animals, Dennis Van Roekel is a lot more concerned about the overall management of the herd that he's buying from — including production level and somatic cell count — than the herd's certification status for Johne's disease.

The Baldwin, Wis., producer is realistic about it: Many of the herds he'd be buying from have Johne's anyway, so he'll go ahead, try to find a bargain and manage around the disease if it should happen to come in inadvertently. If an animal breaks with chronic diarrhea, he'll simply get rid of her.

Referring to the new Johne's certification program proposed for the state of Wisconsin, Van Roekel says he'll continue to pay as much for a heifer which comes from a "maximum-risk" herd that is not testing for Johne's as he would an "A" herd that is testing and found to be Johne's-free — provided the non-test herd has similar management practices and production records.

Many commercial producers share Van Roekel's sentiment. And, perhaps it's a good thing they are not getting too wrapped up in the state certification movement. Many of the states with Johne's-control programs seem intent on doing their own thing — irrespective of

what neighboring states are doing or what's been proposed on the national level. The lack of harmonization between state programs will cause confusion and ultimately prove counter-productive to Johne's-control efforts.

Look at the disparity between programs in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Minnesota will be adopting a program similar to one proposed by the National Johne's Working Group, a top-level committee made up of Johne's experts from across the country. That particular program recognizes herds that are free of Johne's by placing them in levels 1,2,3 or 4, depending on how many years a representative sample of their animals have tested negative.

Wisconsin, on the other hand, will probably be adopting a program that designates herds A,B,C, D and "maximum-risk."

Clarence Siroky, state veterinarian in Wisconsin, says the 1,2,3,4 program proposed by the National Johne's Working Group is "totally exclusionary" in that it leaves out herds that test positive. Wisconsin's A,B,C,D program, meanwhile, provides a safety net for positive herds by including them in the ranking system and letting them work their way up, hopefully, to higher ratings. An "A" rating is reserved for

Johne's-negative herds.

New York has a Cattle Health Assurance Program which is modeled somewhat along the lines of the Dairy Quality Assurance Program in that it emphasizes education and management more than testing — at least in the initial stages. Producers can complete the first level of the program without any testing at all. But, to achieve certified negative status, producers must test. In Ohio, the Tested Negative Status Program allows herds to progress from level 1 to level 5, depending on how many years they remain negative for the disease. Each year, participating herds must test all of their production animals two years of age or older.

All of these programs are well-intentioned, no doubt. But the lack of uniformity between states is a problem that needs to be addressed if we are truly going to get a handle on this disease. Otherwise, many producers are going to tune out and get on with their regular business.

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