

The Wisconsin Johne's disease regulations



How they
impact
your dairy

Wisconsin Johne's Disease Management Market Program

Part one in a two-part series

Look for information to manage and control Johne's disease in the next issue of *Hoard's Dairyman*.

A new approach to managing a hidden contagious disease has many farmers asking questions.

The Wisconsin Johne's Disease Management Market Program went into effect on July 1, 2000. The following are some of the most commonly asked questions about the program and its effect on Wisconsin cattle and goat producers:

Am I required by law to have my animals tested?

No. Testing is voluntary.

What does the program offer?

The program offers benefits to animal owners for controlling Johne's disease and provides options to limit their liability when selling animals. As of July 1, 2000, the revised implied warranty became effective which states that a seller implies the cattle or goats are free of Johne's disease unless they offer, in writing, a Johne's disease management classification.

When should I begin testing?

Since the rules are now in effect, you should start discussing a plan with your veterinarian. The Wisconsin Johne's Disease Management Market Program is one of the tools to help you manage Johne's disease. It is a risk-based program. The higher the grade of classification, the lower your risk. The greater the number of years on the program, the lower your risk.

The program is not meant to replace individual management plans for control or prevention. If your herd is negative, a starting point should be to institute biosecurity measures and a calf management plan for your herd. If your herd has positive animals, instituting a calf management plan is essential, along with a test and cull program. In heavily infected herds, vaccination is also an option. The key is: [A HERD PLAN](#). Your veterinarian can help you decide what plan is best for your herd.

Testing for Johne's disease has more than doubled since the program was proposed last year. The advantage of starting now is to benchmark the health of your herd.

What happens if I don't test?

Herds that are not tested are automatically classified as "maximum risk." When you sell an animal, you need to disclose, in writing, that it comes from a maximum risk herd or you risk liability if the animal either has Johne's disease, or later develops the disease.

How do I get started if I want to test my herd and be officially classified?

The procedure is simple. The following are some of the key concepts:

1. Test eligible animals

There are three categories of animals eligible for official testing:

- Bulls, 24 months of age and older.
- All other cattle 36 months of age and older.
- Goats, 18 months of age and older.

(Tests on younger animals are considered diagnostic testing only and are not used for classifying herds.)

Why should I test?

There are four good reasons for testing:

1. Economic benefits

A healthy herd increases the bottom line.

2. Legal benefits

You may be liable if you sell an infected or exposed animal as if it were healthy.

3. Management benefits

Testing gives you a benchmark for managing Johne's disease.

4. Marketing benefits

Testing gives buyers information for making sound business decisions.

2. Official identification

Animals must be officially identified when tested. Official identification means using a USDA uniform series metal ear tag, breed association tattoo, or registration or association number.

3. Options for herd testing

There are three options for testing a herd:

- 1. Random herd tests**-The veterinarian randomly selects and tests either 30 eligible animals or 10 percent of the eligible animals, whichever is greater. All the samples must be collected on the same day.
- 2. Entire herd test**-The veterinarian collects samples from all the eligible animals on the same day or on consecutive days.
- 3. Split herd test**-This requires you to have a test plan approved by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) before you begin. The veterinarian tests the entire herd of eligible animals, collecting the samples over no greater than a 12-month period.

NOTE

If the herd has 30 eligible animals or fewer, neither the random nor the split herd testing is an option. An entire herd test is the only option.

4. Annual testing

Tests must be done every year within two months before or after the anniversary date. If not tested, the herd automatically reverts to the maximum risk. (Anniversary date is when the herd was tested or completed testing.)

What tests can I use?

For cattle, either the ELISA blood test or fecal (manure) culture. If the animal is vaccinated for Johne's disease, you must use the fecal culture. For goats, use the fecal culture.

Who takes the samples?

A licensed, accredited veterinarian must take the samples and send them to an approved laboratory.

Do I automatically receive an official classification when I submit samples to be tested?

No. Your veterinarian must check the appropriate boxes on the form when submitting the samples to the laboratory. Then DATCP will send your classification to you after receiving the test results.

New Johne's disease classifications

Preventive mgmt. level	Number of eligible animals tested	Results
A	a. Entire herd (if less than 30) b. 30 head or 10% of herd	a. No animals test positive b. No animals test positive
B	Entire herd	Fewer than 5% positive
C	Entire herd	5% to 15% positive
D	a. Entire herd b. 30 head or 10% of herd	a. More than 15% positive b. One or more animals test positive
Maximum risk	No official herd test	Automatically classified as maximum risk

If I have my animals tested and receive an official classification, do I have to make the information public?

No. How you use the information is your choice. **But**, DATCP receives many inquiries from buyers looking for clean herds. You may send written permission to allow DATCP to give out your name and herd classification to those potential buyers. The information then will be made available to those who ask. It will then be up to you and the buyers to contact each other. This is good information for marketing purposes. **It is important to remember, that to sell animals and avoid liability, you must provide, in writing, either the herd's official classification or the maximum risk classification.*

What if I only sell feeder animals or animals to slaughter, am I still liable?

No. Animals sold for feeding purposes or slaughter are exempt. No written statement is required.

When I buy replacement animals, can I ask the seller for the herd's official classification?

Definitely. This is what the program is all about, giving you information so you can make informed choices.

Do I have to identify animals that test positive for the disease?

Yes. Test positive animals must be identified permanently with a "J" punched in the animals' left ear by your veterinarian within 30 days of the test results. With a written notice you may sell the "J" punched animal to someone, or the animal may be sent to slaughter without a written notice.

Will I still be able to test individual animals whenever I want?

Yes. Testing individual animals for diagnosis or for sale will not affect your official classification. In fact, testing is encouraged. However, animals that are sampled for any reason and test positive must be identified with the "J" punch.

What if I'm not sure the test is right, and I want a confirmatory test?

Before you even begin any testing, consult your veterinarian on what you want to do with the positive and negative results. You may request a confirmatory test on the ELISA blood test positive animals. This can be done only by the manure culture, not by retesting with the ELISA blood test. Your veterinarian must take the manure sample within 30 days of receiving the ELISA test results. Remember, the culture takes 12-16 weeks for results. If the results are negative on the culture, the animal does not have to be "J" punched and is considered negative for the program. The herd classification will be adjusted accordingly. However, if the culture is positive, the animal then must be "J" punched within 30 days of the results. (This is for both official and diagnostic testing.)

What if I tested under the old prevalence program, will I receive a classification or do I have to test again?

If you tested officially under either the old prevalence program or the new program between July 1, 1999, and July 1, 2000, you were automatically given a classification.

Calf management is a critical control point in Johne's disease prevention. Managing calves properly will reduce the risk of infection of Johne's disease as well as many other diseases. There is no cure for Johne's disease. We can ultimately control Johne's disease by managing our herds to prevent the introduction and spread of the disease.

Look for "Raising calves: The 5 C's of a healthy start" in the next issue of *Hoard's Dairyman*. It will outline the management strategies that can help prevent Johne's disease and other diseases in your herd.

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