



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 11, 2008

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Online Johne's Disease Course Offered to Producers

BOWLING GREEN, KY—The occurrence of Johne's disease in the United States was first described in 1908 in a paper, "A note on the occurrence in America of chronic bacterial dysentery of cattle," authored by Leonard Pearson, then Dean of the veterinary school at the University of Pennsylvania. That was 100 years ago, and, unfortunately, Johne's disease is still a concern today.

"Johne's disease is a slow and progressive bacterial disease of the intestinal tract that affects ruminants and is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium avium paratuberculosis*," states Dr. Michael Carter, National Johne's Disease Control Program Coordinator, National Center for Animal Health Programs, USDA-APHIS-VS. "It causes significant economic loss for producers whose animals have the disease, and the goal of every producer should be to prevent getting it on their farm if they don't have it or control the disease to reduce the economic impact in herds with the disease.

"The more producers know about Johne's disease, the more progress we can make toward reducing this costly disease."

Dr. Carter adds that a National Animal Health Monitoring Systems (NAHMS) Dairy 2007 study suggests that at least one-fourth of U.S. dairy operations may have a relatively high percentage of Johne's-infected cows in their herds, resulting in unexplained lowered milk production and a less healthy bottom line. And, although most U.S. beef herds are not infected with Johne's disease, it is estimated that eight out of 100 U.S. herds may be infected. Johne's-infected beef cows produce less milk resulting in lighter calves at weaning and can be slower to breed back.

To help producers understand Johne's disease and become acquainted with preventive measures, five species-specific producer-oriented online courses and a Spanish version of the dairy course have been developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. The online courses include Johne's Disease for Dairy Producers, Johne's Disease for Beef Producers, Johne's Disease of Sheep Producers, Johne's Disease for Goat Producers and Johne's Disease for Deer and Elk Producers and the Spanish course *Paratuberculosis (Enfermedad de Johne) en rebanos lecheros*.

The online courses, underwritten by a grant from USDA, cover the causes of Johne's disease, how Johne's disease spreads, how to prevent Johne's disease from entering your herd or flock, how to test for Johne's disease and management practices to use to control infections. Dairy and beef producers will also learn how the National Bovine Johne's Disease Control Program works and how to join.

"Each course is species-specific and is free to producers," states Dr. Elisabeth Patton, Designated Johne's Coordinator for Wisconsin and vice chair of the Committee on Johne's Disease, U.S. Animal Health Association. "Plus, producers can complete their respective module in less than 60 minutes."

Taking one of the six Johne's disease online courses involves six simple steps. The first five steps take about five minutes to complete. The final step—partaking in the course—will involve about 30-45 minutes.

Step #1: Go to the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine web site, www.vetmedce.org, where you'll see the home page titled "Veterinary Continuing Education." Once at this page, click on "Courses" written in red at the lower left of the page.

Step #2: Once at the "Courses" web page, click on "Johne's Disease" located in the left-hand column.

Step #3: A new web page will appear. On this page, click on "Johne's Disease Courses for Producers."

Step #4: You're now at a new web page that lists the six Johne's disease courses. Now you simply click on the course title that is appropriate for you.

Step #5: Once at your species page, a list of what you'll learn is listed along with other relevant information.

Step #6: Begin your species-specific course. Producers wanting a certificate of course completion are asked to register before taking the course and will be required to take a quiz after watching and listening to the presentation.

Each species-specific module is like sitting in a classroom, only you're sitting at your computer. Two speakers share information, and information is shown on slides.

"If you have a computer, then you can add to your knowledge base about Johne's disease," Dr. Patton states "What a great investment of a producer's time."

In addition to the online courses, producers can obtain information about Johne's disease by visiting www.johnesdisease.org or by contacting the National Johne's Education Initiative, National Institute for Animal Agriculture, phone 270.782.9798.

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) is dedicated to programs that work towards the eradication of diseases that pose risk to the health of animals, wildlife and humans; promote a safe and wholesome food supply for our nation and abroad; and promote best practices in environmental stewardship, animal health and well-being. NIAA members include producers, veterinarians, animal scientists, researchers, state and federal officials, and agribusiness executives. More information is available at www.animalagriculture.org.

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