

Free online Johne's course available

The occurrence of Johne's disease in the United States was first described in 1908. That was 100 years ago. Unfortunately, Johne's disease is still a concern today.

Michael Carter, National Johne's Disease Control Program coordinator at the National Center for Animal Health Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Veterinary Service (USDA-APHIS-VS), points out that the National Animal Health Monitoring Systems (NAHMS) "Beef 1996" study estimated that eight out of 100 U.S. herds may be infected with the bacteria that causes Johne's disease. Infected beef herds usually experience lighter calves at weaning and cows tend to be slower to breed back.

"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*," Carter states. "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 effect in herds with the disease.

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

Help online

To help beef producers understand Johne's disease and become acquainted with preventive measures, an online course has been developed specifically for beef producers. Underwritten by a grant from USDA and developed by the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) School of Veterinary Medicine, the online course covers the causes of Johne's disease, how Johne's disease spreads, how to prevent Johne's disease from entering your herd, how to test for Johne's disease and management practices to use to control infections.

The course also explains how the National Bovine Johne's Disease Control Program works and how producers can participate in the national program.

"Producers can complete their respective module in less than 60 minutes," says Elisabeth Patton, Johne's coordinator for Wisconsin and vice chair of the Committee on Johne's Disease, U.S. Animal Health Association.

Taking the Johne's disease online course 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 UW 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 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, and you need to simply click on the "Beef

Producer" course title.

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. They will be

required to take a quiz after they watch and listen to the presentation.

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 (NIAA), at 270-782-9798.