



Why Care About Johne's Disease?

by Whitney Hull and Julie Smith, DVM, PhD

The Benefits of Controlling Johne's Disease

Johne's disease imposes hidden costs on herd health and profitability.

1 MORE MILK IN THE TANK: MORE MONEY IN YOUR POCKET

Production declines rapidly for cows in the advanced stage of disease, and life-time production is reduced for clinical cows.¹⁴ While the annual losses can be hard to quantify due to the subclinical nature of the disease, estimates indicate that Johne's disease costs U.S. dairy farmers \$33 per cow each year in lost revenue.¹²

1

2 FEWER INVOLUNTARY CULLS: HIGHER VALUE CULLS

As the infection progresses, animals with high-positive test results are at a greater risk for culling. Reasons for premature culling include decreased milk production, poor pregnancy rates, and disease control.¹⁵ Affected cattle with thin body condition have reduced value at slaughter.⁷ Cows known to be infected should not be sold for dairy without disclosing their status.

2

3 HEALTHIER COWS

Biosecurity practices used to prevent the spread of Johne's disease also reduce the spread of other fecal-oral transmitted disease organisms such as Salmonella, E. coli, Coccidia, and Cryptosporidium (Crypto).¹⁴

3

4 INCREASED FOOD SAFETY

Organisms like Salmonella, E. coli, and Cryptosporidium pose a risk to human health as foodborne illnesses. Biosecurity practices to mitigate Johne's disease can also reduce the circulation of other pathogens and increase the safety of the food supply.

4



A healthy Jersey cow.



A healthy Jersey calf.

Is Johne's Disease a Risk to Human Health?

While difficult to prove cause and effect, the bacteria that cause Johne's disease have been associated with Crohn's disease in humans in some studies.⁹ Further research is needed to better understand if there is a causal link between Johne's and Crohn's diseases.

Publication date: August 2024

Johne's Disease Facts

Cows affected by Johne's disease suffer a costly yield drag of 5-15 percent.⁷

Managing Johne's disease simultaneously reduces the risk of spreading other costly diseases.

Your herd may be inadvertently affected by purchasing new animals.

Only awareness and management can prevent Johne's disease from further spread among ruminants.

Additional resources on Johne's & Crohn's diseases:

- **Johne's Information Center** - <https://www.johnes.org/>
- **Crohn's and Colitis Foundation** - <https://go.uvm.edu/rb1ps>



This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number ONE22-416-AWD00000495. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, VT. University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.