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## Johne's Disease – Steps needed for Control

Emphasis on biosecurity opens the door for milk replacer sales

*Johne's Disease is becoming a more prevalent problem on dairy herds today for many reasons. This article uncovers the reasons why Johne's Disease is a problem. It also points out the sales opportunities that exist within the steps needed to control Johne's Disease*

One very important reason is that there is a lack of knowledge of what Johne's Disease is and what it can do to a herd if allowed to go unchecked. Herd expansion is also causing a need for dairies that were previously "closed" (i.e., no purchased animals brought on to the farm) to go out on the open market and purchase additional animals. Perhaps the most important reason Johne's Disease is becoming more prevalent is that Dairy Managers commonly focus their energies on the adult lactating herd. There is usually little time and energy left over to develop a comprehensive Johne's control program.

Should the above reasons keep a herd from implementing a Johne's Disease Control Program? Of course not. There are three key issues that need to be followed to help control Johne's Disease. They are:

**Test the adult cows for Johne's Disease and cull positive animals.** This becomes the cornerstone of a good Johne's Disease control program. This is critical because Johne's is transferred to the calf by the infected mother at birth or shortly thereafter. The infection is transferred through the colostrum, milk or feces. If positive cows are identified, they can be eliminated and procedures can be put in place to prevent their calves from becoming infected. The local veterinarian can easily develop a Johne's testing program.

**Prevent the spread of infection from the cows to the newborn calves and replacement heifers.** This requires a consistent approach to the time of calving. The following steps should be followed:

1. *Prepare a clean environment for the cow to calve in.* Remember that the source of new infections is from colostrum, milk and feces. The bottom line is to keep the area clean and separate colostrum and milk from Johne's positive cows.
2. *Prepare the cow for calving.* Remove all manure and dirt from the birthing area and the udder.
3. *Remove the calf from the cow after birthing as soon as possible.* Do not allow the calf to nurse.
4. *Hand feed 4 quarts of colostrum to the calf as soon as possible.* Do not pool colostrum. If clean colostrum is in short supply, consider the use of a high quality, dry powder colostrum supplement.
5. *Transfer the calf to a clean, dry area that is removed from any contact with older animals on the farm.* Do not allow any manure contamination from the older animals to come in contact with the calves on the farm.
6. *Feed only milk replacer until weaning.* Do not feed waste milk of any kind to the replacement heifers. Milk replacer ingredients are pasteurized, therefore limiting the potential for disease transmission.

**Only purchase Johne's Disease free replacement animals.** This will assure that you do not bring the Disease back on to the farm once you have taken the effort to begin a control program.

The three key issues discussed above are a great way to start a Johne's control program. The local veterinarian should be consulted as to the specifics of any plan and all employees on the dairy operation need to be informed of what is trying to be accomplished. The important thing is to begin.