

Role of the Veterinary Practitioner in Industry-led Dairy Health and Quality Programs in Ontario.

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Introduction: The Ontario dairy industry has recently embarked on a series of health and quality improvement programs for dairy producers, mandated by the national organization, Dairy Farmers of Canada. Uniquely, in Ontario, three of these programs have been delivered via successful partnerships with private veterinary practitioners.

Objective: To illustrate the role private veterinarians can play in industry-led programs and demonstrate the positive impact of such collaborations.

Methods: The Ontario Johnes' Management Assistance Program, runs from January 2010 until October 2013. Herd owners join voluntarily and are reimbursed for testing costs (ELISA) provided they do the Johnes' Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP) with their herd veterinarian and dispose of all High Titre cows (those with ELISA score of 1.0 or higher; where a positive test is 0.1 or higher) within 90 days. As of March 2013, 247 private practitioners have conducted Johnes' RAMPs for 2215 producers (52 % of all Ontario herds). Current program statistics are available at www.johnes.ca. The program is successfully delivering farm-specific recommendations to producers to prevent the spread of *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* to calves.

Canadian Quality Milk (CQM) is a national on-farm food safety program, delivered by provincial milk marketing boards. In Ontario, Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) partnered with the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners to train volunteering veterinary practitioners as program advisors. Advisors prepare producers for their on-farm audit of protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for veterinary drug use, avoidance of milk and meat residues, maintaining and cleaning milking equipment and other key activities. As of May 2013, 159 veterinarians are trained CQM Advisors. Since the program was launched approximately 80% of 1500 producers have passed their first audit completely. The remaining 20% have passed after fulfilling corrections. DFO has publicly credited a large part of the success of the program rollout and high rate of successful producer registration to the role of the veterinary practitioners.

On August 1st 2012 Ontario adopted 400,000 cells/ml as the regulatory limit for bulk milk somatic cell counts (BMSCCs). In preparation for this significant change, 58 veterinary practitioners, representing 39 practices, participated in SCC workshops to learn about using the Mastitis RAMP. Subsequently, 23 practitioners completed a Mastitis RAMP on 70 of their clients' farms in a two week period, as part of a pilot project. Analysis of the RAMP scores and producer quality records showed that herds where practitioners conducted Mastitis RAMPs decreased their BMSCC and

were less likely to experience an increase in BMSCC increase over three month period following the RAMP, compared to non-RAMP control herds.

Results and Significance: These three programs are examples of veterinary practitioner and industry collaboration with positive results measured in program participation, successful program completion and/or improvement in quality measures and cattle health. Veterinarians have commented that the programs strengthened their tie with producers, improved treatment programs, increased awareness of on-farm activities, allowed formal consultation in less traditional areas such as calf health and financially supported veterinary practices. From the industry perspective, having veterinarians deliver health programs for specific initiatives has given credibility to these programs by the addition of veterinary technical expertise and oversight.