



# Johne's focus groups learning together

**A** combination of the management club approach with producer-selected demonstrations, the Ontario Johne's Focus Farms project has brought together 120 dairy farmers in eight groups across the province. They have been meeting regularly during the past year to discuss and develop practical solutions to control Johne's.

Meetings have been combined with visits with farmers who have already changed their management to help prevent the disease's spread. Internationally renowned speakers from Canada and the U.S. have provided the latest Johne's information and advice.

There is no charge to join a group. Meetings are held at a farm with agendas set by group members themselves. Each group revolves around a volunteer Focus Farm herd and herd owner, often Johne's-positive.

Producers share ideas and stories that centre on how to improve farm management, calving and calf management. Since improved calf management impacts many aspects of farm performance, discussion can be wide-ranging.

Some groups have had farmers talk openly about the difficulty of controlling Johne's. One producer described

an amazing multigenerational timeline to emphasize how this disease is difficult to predict and trace.

Producers have been trying many of the discussed changes at their own farms, organizers have found. They report on results at subsequent meetings, and the whole group benefits.

Groups have different opinions and each has approached the subject differently. The common theme, however, is reducing the risk of Johne's disease.

Speakers have included Sam Leadley of Attica Veterinary Associates in New York state, who has managed many hundreds of calves during his

career. He has provided insight on managing Johne's disease, the pros and cons of colostrum feeding and his practical no-nonsense approach to calving and calf disease management. Neil Anderson and Harold House from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs have discussed options for calf feeding and housing.

In November, the groups will combine to hear the wisdom of Ken Nordland from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. His topics will range from calving management to heifer housing. 

## How to join a group

The Focus Farm groups are organized by regional veterinary practices. The vets act as facilitators and ensure farmers get a chance to exchange ideas and opinions. You can get involved by simply calling one of the veterinarians listed below or by e-mailing [info@agrms.com](mailto:info@agrms.com).

- New Liskeard, Dr. Lance Males
- Navan, Dr. Dave Douglas
- Kemptville, Dr. Brian Keith
- Napanee, Dr. Rob Walsh
- Listowel, Dr. Christie Morrow
- Seaforth, Dr. Geert Jongert
- Tavistock, Dr. Chris Church
- Kirkton, Dr. Reg Clinton

## The facts about high-titre (HT) cows.

Out of 78,868 cows tested to date\* in the Ontario Johne's program, only 1 in 700 were found to be HT.

\* January 2010 to September 2011

### Concerned your best cow might be HT?

At such low odds, the chance you have any HT cows in your herd (let alone your best cow), is extremely low. However, if your best cow is in fact HT, then she really ISN'T your best cow.

### Remember - it's still your decision!

No matter what your herd results are, the fact remains YOU decide whether or not to cull your HT cow.

**DON'T MISS OUT - TEST FOR FREE NOW!**



**Johne's Education & Management Assistance Program**

For more information on the Johne's Assistance Program, please contact coordinator Nicole Perkins at:  
Phone: (226) 979-1664  
Fax: (519) 846-8178  
[johnes@uoguelph.ca](mailto:johnes@uoguelph.ca)

[www.johnes.ca](http://www.johnes.ca)