



Johne's dry cow testing optional

By Nicole Perkins and Ann Godkin

When the time comes for your whole herd test under the Ontario Johne's Education and Management Assistance Program, you may wonder whether to include dry cows. The answer to this frequently asked question depends on your herd's particular situation.

Testing dry cows under the program is optional. You can probably justify it if your herd has recently diagnosed clinical Johne's cases, a high prevalence of suspected infection or purchased a lot of cows. Identifying as many potentially shedding cows as possible is critical in herds like these. If your herd fits any of these descriptions, talk to your herd veterinarian as soon as possible.

You have to test dry cows in the same testing window as lactating cows to receive testing reimbursement under the program. To test dry cows, your herd vet will have to collect blood samples during the herd's testing window, and submit them to the University of Guelph Animal Health Laboratory (AHL).

Along with the blood samples, you have to include a Johne's Program Testing Submission Form, available from the program co-ordinator, and a Johne's Program Herd Information Form, available by download at www.johnes.ca to receive testing reimbursement.

The Johne's Program Testing Submission Form information is relayed to the program co-ordinator to arrange testing reimbursement. The Johne's Program Herd Information Form describes cows being blood tested (name or number, lactation number and breed). This form is used whenever blood samples for the Johne's program are submitted to AHL.

Beyond these logistics, here are points to consider when you and your vet decide whether to test dry cows:

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- positive test prevalence will be about the same among dry cows as it is in your milking herd. If the lactating herd is low prevalence, dry cows likely will be too. If you are unlikely to gain additional herd level information, dry cow testing is not warranted;
- testing dry cows may lead to interpreting results at the individual cow level. This can lead to attempts to manage individual cows, which can create management errors since the test is not perfect at the individual cow level. Individual infected cows may have negative test results, and uninfected cows occasionally may have positive tests. Always interpret test results at the herd level—with the exception of the high-titre (HT) cows testing at 1.0 or higher. Herd level management changes, such as changes to calf feeding, are needed when your herd is at risk of Johne's;
- be prepared to act on the information you get back. If results identify a HT cow, you have to remove her within 90 days of test date or before she calves, whichever comes first, to



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receive the whole herd test reimbursement. You are also eligible to receive \$250 for each HT cow identified on a whole herd test, provided all program requirements for that year are completed.

You or your vet can call or e-mail us to discuss any aspects of the program, Johne's disease or testing.

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