

Saskatchewan Johne's Disease Surveillance Program

The Saskatchewan Johne's Disease Surveillance Program has been renewed for another five years. The Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association (SSGA) is the administrator for the Johne's program and funding will be provided under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) program.

The Saskatchewan Johne's Disease Surveillance Program first began in the fall of 2013 and concluded in March 2018 with funding provided by Growing Forward 2, the federal-provincial-territorial agriculture program. Initially, the program involved purebred beef cattle breeders but was opened to commercial beef producers in late 2014. Now, small ruminant (sheep and goat) producers can access the program as well.

Johne's is a debilitating bacterial disease affecting the intestines of cattle, sheep and goats. It is caused by the *Mycobacterium avium* ss. *paratuberculosis* bacteria (MAP). The long incubation period makes Johne's difficult to detect and prevent. Many animals within a herd may be infected before any clinical signs are observed. Animals that look normal can still shed the bacteria and infect other animals in the herd. Detecting infections may be further complicated because signs of disease usually do not appear until the animals are adults.

Infection usually occurs as a calf/lamb/kid through ingestion of the bacterium which is found in manure, milk or colostrum, as well as in-utero. Symptoms include chronic diarrhea and weight loss despite the animal having a good appetite, and thin frames. In sheep and goats, diarrhea is less common than in cattle.

There is no treatment for Johne's Disease. Once the clinical signs are evident, the affected animals eventually die. Therefore, it is managed as a herd problem by testing animals and usually can be difficult since the bacteria survive a long time in the environment. In addition to herd management, producers are encouraged to check that new animals brought into the herd or flock are not infected, and to avoid exposing calves/lambs/kids to infected animals.

Johne's is diagnosed by laboratory testing of blood or feces. Under the provincial Johne's Disease program, mature cows and bulls in a herd receive a blood test that is sent to a laboratory to test for Johne's. If the disease is found in the herd, a Johne's Disease risk assessment management plan (RAMP) must be completed. For producers accessing the program for the first time, the program covers all costs associated with blood collection for testing, including veterinary fees, sample shipping, lab testing, and veterinarian fees for the Johne's risk assessment management planning. Producers are eligible to apply to the program every second year; producers are required to pay 50% of the costs when accessing the program for the second and subsequent times.

All Saskatchewan beef, sheep and goat producers are eligible for the program; however, funding is limited and applications are approved on a first-come, first-served basis.

More information on the program can be found at <http://skstockgrowers.com/johnes-disease-surveillance-program> , or by calling the Saskatchewan Stock Grower's Association at 306-757-8523.