



PA Johne's Program News

October 22, 2008



Johne's Program Update

Dear Bovine Practitioner,

As you may already know, federal (USDA) funding for the Voluntary Johne's Program has been significantly reduced for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. The amount Pennsylvania received for the year is approximately one-sixth of the amount we received in 2004. At the same time, due to the condition of the state budget, the Department of Agriculture does not have any additional funds available to compensate for the reduction in federal funding.

This substantial reduction in funding has forced us to make some hard choices. After considering the options and discussing the situation extensively with the Pennsylvania Johne's Advisory Group (which consists of veterinarians, farmers, extension educators and ag industry professionals) the Animal Health and Diagnostics Commission supported the following program changes:

1. Incentive payments directly paid to producers *will be discontinued*.
2. Incentive payments to veterinarians for completing risk assessments and herd management plans will continue at the current level, *but will only be available for the first two years of a farm's enrollment in the program*.
3. Laboratory test costs (culture & ELISA) for program herds *will be increased*.
4. The program will begin offering a pooled fecal culture option.
5. Culture of environmental samples will continue to be subsidized at a higher level in order to promote this method of diagnosing infected herds and herds with potential supershedders.
6. Milk ELISA testing will be subsidized for program herds which incorporate milk ELISA testing into their management plans.

These changes will become effective on November 15, 2008. Please keep this in mind since the economic impact on your clients will be starting on that date.

Thank you for your help and continued support of the Johne's program in Pennsylvania. Some details of these changes are provided below, but do not hesitate to contact any of us for further information, or to discuss these changes.

Pennsylvania's Designated Johne's Coordinators
David Griswold
David Blahna
Ernest Hovingh

Laboratory Test Price Changes:

TEST	Current "Program Herd" Price	New "Program Herd" Price ¹	"Non-program herd" Price (unchanged)
Serum ELISA	FREE	\$2.00	\$4.50
Milk ELISA ²	-----	\$4.00	\$6.00
Fecal culture	\$4.00	\$12.00	\$17.00
Pooled fecal analysis ³ (5 samples/pool)	-----	\$20.00	\$20.00
Culture of all 5 samples from positive pools ³ (per sample)		\$4.00	\$17.00
Environmental culture ⁴ (per sample)	-----	\$5.00	\$17.00

¹ Herds must remain active in the program (have a current risk assessment/herd management plan) in order to qualify for these prices. *Prices may increase when available federal Johnes program monies have been utilized.*

² Milk ELISA testing will be offered through Lancaster DHIA. They will make the subsidies available to qualifying herds. **See below for details.**

³ In most situations, pooled samples will be tested by PCR. (Pooling must be done at the lab.) All 5 individual samples from positive pools will be cultured at \$4/sample. Therefore, a positive pool will cost \$40.00 (\$20.00 pool PCR + \$20.00 individual culture).

⁴ Environmental cultures require 6 composite samples, each consisting of multiple grab samples from specific areas on the farm. Directions for environmental sampling are available through the Harrisburg Laboratory, from PDA (717-772-2852), or on-line at vetextension.psu.edu/Johnes (under "News and Information").

While these price changes may at first seem to be extreme, please keep in mind that testing should not be the central focus of a herd's Johnes control program. Without addressing the risk factors for disease transmission on the farm and changing management to ameliorate them, no amount of testing and culling will reduce the prevalence of Johnes Disease on a farm. We realize that there are herds that still rely heavily on testing programs and that this may create frustration and concern for them. Obviously they can continue to test extensively, but this will be at an increased cost. However there are other options which will allow them to continue testing at some level, but at the same time direct more of their energy toward management changes which will just as effectively, if not more so, reduce the prevalence of infection in their herds. We hope that you will take the opportunity to provide guidance to your clients on management strategies that incorporate timely and appropriate testing that will not be overly costly and yet still allow them to achieve infection rate reduction on the farm.

Milk ELISA Option Now Available

In order to be eligible for the reduced-cost milk ELISA a herd's Johnes Certified Veterinarian **must** specify milk ELISA testing in the management plan/testing strategy. This applies equally for currently enrolled, and newly-enrolling herds. (Therefore, currently enrolled herds must have their existing herd management plan amended to include milk ELISA testing, and must submit an updated copy to the Bureau (attn: Nikki Mummah) **prior** to applying for the milk ELISA subsidy.) The veterinarian will receive a copy of all milk ELISA results from LDHIA.

Milk ELISA (con't)

A herd is only eligible to receive the reduced-cost ELISA for a maximum of 65% of their average total mature cow inventory in a calendar year. (Eg. A 100-cow herd will be able to get 65 tests at the reduced cost of \$4.00 - any additional tests will cost \$6.00)

Current LDHIA client herds simply need to fill out the form which will be provided by the LDHIA technician in order to qualify for the \$2.00/sample price reduction. Herds which are not LDHIA clients will need to contact LDHIA (888-202-3442) for details and arrangements.

Through March 2009 only 5,000 tests are available at the reduced price - these will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

If a producer and/or their veterinarian wish to use the milk ELISA 'outside' of the program, they are of course welcome to do so. However, tests run in this manner will not be billed at the reduced rate, nor will they qualify for 'official' program purposes (eg. entering Status Level I).

Pooled Fecal Analysis

Pooled fecal analysis offers an economical option for herds, and especially herds with a low prevalence of Johne's culture-positive animals to test their animals. However, it is important to understand a few things about this testing strategy to avoid surprises!

All the pooling of samples will be done at the laboratory in Harrisburg. Therefore, all animals to be tested must be individually sampled, and the samples must be clearly identified with the individual animal ID, as is currently done for individual animal culture.

In most cases the pooled samples will be analyzed by PCR in order to expedite the process. This means that the final fecal culture results will be available in almost the same amount of time it now takes to get individual animal culture results to you.

All of the samples from all positive pools will automatically be cultured. Therefore, herds with a moderate to high prevalence will incur relatively higher cost if many of the pooled samples are positive. However, due to the significant cost reduction being offered for pooled testing the cost will still be substantially lower than doing individual animal cultures.

Individual animal culture approach					
"Test-eligible" animals in herd				Culture cost	Total cost*
100				\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00
Pooled fecal culture approach					
"Test-eligible" animals in herd	# pools	Pool PCR cost	# positive pools	Culture cost	Total cost*
100	20	\$400.00	2	\$40.00	\$440.00
100	20	\$400.00	7	\$140.00	\$540.00

* Cost for official "program herds." Does not include the cost to the client for collecting the samples!

Pooled fecal (con't)

Pooled testing has been evaluated in a number of different laboratories, and has been accepted as being an accurate and economical way to find fecal culture positive animals. The occasional “low shedder” will be missed with this technique (that is, the pool is ‘negative’ but individual animal cultures would have found a positive), and on rare occasions a pool sample may be positive but all of the individual samples are culture negative. Please call Dr. Tewari at the lab in Harrisburg, or one of the Designated Johne’s Coordinators to discuss the use of pooled testing.

Whole Herd Testing for Status Level Herds

A whole herd fecal test is the required step for herds moving from Status Level II to Status Level III. The fecal pooling option is permitted for this testing, as is individual culture. Because this is mandatory testing, special pricing will be made available to reduce the cost for participating herds. Please contact PDA at 717-772-2852 or 717- 783-5301 in advance to make arrangements to receive the reduced testing costs, and to understand how the pooled testing will be utilized in this situation. (For example, **any** pool of samples found positive for *Mycobacterium avium subsp. paratuberculosis* will cause the herd to be classified as an infected herd, even if the individual animal samples are all culture negative.)

Sample Submission Reminders

In order to receive the discounted costs, the herd **must** be enrolled and have a current, approved herd plan in place. Write “**PA Johne’s Program Herd**” across the top of the submission form so that the lab knows the herd is eligible for the reduced cost. If the herd is not enrolled or current, you may receive an invoice for the non-program cost, so please make sure your herds remain current with their herd plan!

If submitting more than 25 samples in a submission for culture test, please schedule your submissions by first calling the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory in Harrisburg @ 717-787-8808.