

## **Beef-Specific Johne's Disease Awareness Program**

Johne's Disease is a production-limiting disease in beef and dairy cattle. To date, studies of the disease in beef cattle have been few and it's commonly felt that infection is less common in beef cattle, but anecdotal reports from veterinarians and beef producers indicate that when it does strike the results can be devastating. The disease spreads from herd to herd with the movement of cattle who are infected but show no signs.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association has partnered with the Veterinary Science group at OMAFRA and with the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners (the cattle vet organization in Ontario) and has been successful in obtaining government funding for a beef-specific pilot project. Funding has been secured to pay the cost of herd veterinarians taking blood samples from cows on up to 75 farms with an approximate herd size of 40 cows. These samples will be tested at the Animal Health Lab in Guelph for antibody to *Mycobacterium avium* paratuberculosis (MAP), the bacteria that causes Johne's Disease.

Once the blood test results are known, the veterinarian will return to the respective farm and discuss the test results with the herd owner. Using the test results to put the herd situation in perspective, the vet and owner will go through a farm-specific Risk Assessment and Management Plan (RAMP) questionnaire together. This will help the owner to come up with management changes that can be used to help minimize the risk of spreading Johne's Disease. Participating producers who take this final step will be eligible for reimbursement for the cost of the veterinary visits and the testing (\$8/head).

Because of spread of this disease is strongly associated with cattle movement (loans, leases, sales and purchases), this initial pilot program is targeted towards purebred (seedstock) herd owners. Only these herds will be eligible for this project.

Results from the pilot project will be aggregated into a "beef cattle" database to look at the pattern of Johne's Disease test results. No individual producer names or cattle breeds will be identified. From this pilot, we hope to begin to gain an understanding of the prevalence of Johne's Disease among purebred herds in Ontario.

If you are interested in being involved, please discuss this project with your herd veterinarian. Either you or your herd vet can contact Ann Godkin in OMAFRA for details [ann.godkin@ontario.ca](mailto:ann.godkin@ontario.ca) 519-846-3409). To discuss OCA's involvement please contact Paul Stiles, [paul@cattle.guelph.on.ca](mailto:paul@cattle.guelph.on.ca) or 519-824-0334.