A. The economic impact of Johne's varies widely from herd to herd. The number of animals involved and how long the disease goes undetected are major factors which determine the course of the disease. Failure to recognize the progression of Johne's prevents early, aggressive culling of infected animals, which is needed to reduce the contamination and exposure within the herd. Culling of animals, before the disease progresses to advance stages with a severe loss of body condition, will provide greater salvage value and less loss to the owner. The median price received for culled in good condition is reported to be about $400; $250 per head for those in poor condition. These losses also interfere with the development and selection of genetic replacements. Reports indicate a lot of breeding animals are sold out of infected herds. Increased culling rates and lack of readily available genetic selection results in increased replacement costs. This can vary greatly, depending upon their source and quality, but will be close to $1100 per head.

Veterinary expenses will also be greater for infected herds. Additional diagnostic, testing and consultation fees will negatively impact a herd's potential to return a profit.

Q. What Does Johne's Cost You?

A. Milk Loss: (based on a milk price of $1.30/cwt)

If greater than 10% of cull cows show symptoms, use a per-cow loss of $227 (or 1,500 lbs.);
If fewer than 10% show symptoms, use a per-cow milk loss of $40 (or 300 lbs.)

Number of cows  __________  x    Lost Milk Value   ____________   =    _____________

Replacement Costs:

Number of replacement heifers purchased per year _____________  x   $1100  =  + _____________

Cull Value:

Early Culling (before clinical signs are obvious) use a per-cow value of $400;
Late Culling (after clinical signs are obvious) use a per-cow value of $250

Number of culled animals ____________  x   Culling Value  _________ =   -  _____________

Additional Veterinary Costs:
Consult your veterinarian about estimating diagnostic, testing and consultation costs + _____________

Sub Total:    $    _____________

*Cost estimates based on USDA's 1996 National Animal Health Management Study

Total Loss:    $  _____________
Q. What Is Johne's Disease?

A. Johne's Disease is often referred to as the "silent" disease since for each animal that shows signs of chronic diarrhea and weight loss there are 6-8 infected but asymptomatic adults. Manure from infected adults can be used to contaminate the environment.

Q. Why is Johne's called the "Silent" Disease?

A. Uninfected young animals ingest the organism and become infected. Once the infection becomes established, the animal may not show signs of the disease for years. The signs of disease are usually not apparent until the animal is two years of age or older.

Q. What happens after a calf ingests the Johne's organism?

A. Stage I: "Silent" Infection. Once the Johne's organism is ingested it multiplies in the small intestine and spreads to the lymph nodes. This stage of the disease (Stage I) lasts at least two years and is referred to as the "silent" stage. It is not possible to diagnose the disease in the live animal at this stage.

Q. What is Johne's Disease referred to as?

A. Subclinical "Silent" Johne's. Subclinical infected cows appear normal and do not show symptoms of the disease.

Q. What do infected cows look like?

A. Clinical Johne's: Infected cows (generally greater than two years of age) often have sudden or intermittent bouts of watery diarrhea. These cows continue to eat, yet lose weight and fail to respond to treatment for diarrheal disease and parasitism.

Q. What happens after a calf ingests the Johne's organism?

A. Stage II: Inapparent Carrier Adults. The next stage (generally in animals greater than two years of age) occurs when the animal's immune system is affected and produces antibodies to the disease. Diagnostic tests can be used to detect infection at this stage. This stage is referred to as the inapparent adult carrier stage because animals do not show symptoms of the disease, yet they shed the organism in their manure. Animals can remain in this stage for years.

Q. How can herd management control Johne's?

A. Prevention, control and elimination requires the adoption of two fundamental principles: (1) prevent highly susceptible newborn calves and young animals from ingesting manure from infected adults and (2) reduce total farm environmental contamination by M. paratuberculosis shedding the bacteria.

Q. How does infected manure contaminate the environment?

A. Manure from infected adults contaminates the environment by: (1) contaminating the farm environment by manure from infected adults and (2) reducing total environmental contamination by M. paratuberculosis shedding the bacteria.

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