

**MERRY CHRISTMAS:** First and foremost we wish to extend to all of you wishes for a very blessed Christmas! That is what many of us celebrate at this time of year. That's what we need to remember. The gift that we were all given is precious. We really need to remember every day and give thanks.

We also very much value the opportunity to serve you as veterinarians. Thank you very much for your trust. Your trust is also something we value very much!

**IMPORTANT JOHNES' INFORMATION!** A very large number of our dairy herds have recognized that Johnes' disease as a very serious threat to their herd. We have definitely found that once this disease is in your herd, Johnes' doesn't go away on its own. It will very definitely spread, and wreak havoc on your herd and your herds' health and longevity. On the other hand, some producers have found increased animal value in establishing and maintaining a herd at a low or certified negative test status. Whatever your reason for Johnes' control, information is out that you need to understand.

Herds that have performed Johnes' Risk Assessments or **herds that routinely test or vaccinate calves for Johnes' disease** should have received a form from the USDA called "JOHNES DISEASE MANAGEMENT COSTS REIMBURSEMENT-ELIGIBILITY REQUEST". This form, if filled out and returned by February 28, 2007, makes you eligible to receive reimbursement for any costs to your dairy in 2007 associated with Johnes' disease testing, Johnes' vaccination of calves, and risk assessments performed. **All that is required of the dairy is that they have completed a Johnes' disease risk assessment before February 28, 2007** by a veterinarian certified to perform risk assessments (Dr Al and Dr Nathan).

In 2007 any expenses associated with blood testing, Johnes' vaccination of calves, and risk assessments and renewals (annual) will be reimbursed. Reimbursement will not be limited to those herds testing for certification. Testing and vaccination expenses will be reimbursed up to 75%, and risk assessments 100% reimbursement. This is a change from the past, where veterinarians were paid directly by the USDA for performing risk assessments, and we sent in your documentation of expenses for testing reimbursement benefits to dairymen. Now dairies will be asked to submit invoices for reimbursement.

So if you received such a form, and probably a W9 tax form from the Dept of Agriculture, don't throw it away! Let's get it filled out appropriately and into the state of Wisconsin. If you routinely test in your herd and want to be eligible for reimbursement of some of your cost, make sure your risk assessment is completed or current to be eligible. Also, in anticipation of reimbursements, probably beginning in or after March, keep copies of invoices or bills from us to demonstrate proof of expenses! These would begin with your February 1, 2007 billing from our office. We will have Johnes' expenses itemized to accommodate your need.

The Department of Agriculture will be holding producer informational meetings in January and February to further explain and answer questions. We strongly encourage you to attend such a meeting so you don't miss out on the opportunity available!

**On a final note, it had been demonstrated that blood testing alone will not speed the elimination of Johnes' disease on your farm.** Testing is only one tool in the battle. However performing a risk assessment helps focus a farm on where their greatest risks of spreading the disease are. Assessments help you prioritize what should be done on your farm to speed the reduction of the disease in your herd.