



## Mill Creek Veterinary Services

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**Problem Identified:** **Johne's Disease** caused by *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*.

**Clinical Signs:** The main observation is profuse intermittent diarrhea that does not respond to antibiotics or other therapy. Upon physical examination, animals will exhibit no fever and normal appetite. Chronic cases lead to severe weight loss, decrease milk production, emaciation, and death. The clinical signs for Johne's disease usually present in animals greater than 2 years old due to the long incubation period of the disease.

**Transmission:** Susceptibility to infection is highest in the newborn nursing calf and decreases with age. The major route of transmission is through contaminated fecal material from an infected dam to her offspring or other calves with intimate contact. Calves ingest the organism by nursing contaminated teats, licking the dam, and contact with contaminated feces in the environment. The organism can survive in organic matter and soil for months or even years. It is difficult to infect adult animals since the incubation period for *M. paratuberculosis* is very long. There are other methods of transmission, but fecal-oral is the most recognized form.

**Diagnosis:** Fecal samples may be taken to a diagnostic laboratory; however, results take a long time before a true negative can be determined. My preferred method is a blood sample in a red top tube. There is a possibility to get a "false negative" due to cattle being in the early stages of the infection. However, when the sample is positive, it is fully accurate that the animal has *M. paratuberculosis* infection.

**Treatment:** There is no treatment for Johne's disease. Animals need to be culled from the herd.

**Control:** Sanitation. Sanitation. Sanitation. Cows should calve in clean, disinfected, well-bedded maternity pens. The quick removal of excess fecal material, placenta, or debris helps lower transmission. Also, move calves quickly to another site where exposure to fecal material from possibly infected animals is unlikely. At the secondary site, feed high-quality colostrum from a bottle instead of letting the calf suckle the dam. A freshly calved dam often has filth and debris on the teats which inoculates the calf if it suckles.