

Johne's Disease Costs More than Cattlemen Think

Slow, easygoing Johne's disease can cost considerably more than many of our cattlemen think. We have made a start toward getting reliable figures on this widespread intestinal disorder through a herd study conducted by the USDA Regional Animal Disease Laboratory, Auburn, Ala. Past estimates often involved uncertainty over a herdsman's memory, actual cause of losses, and effects of control efforts.

ARS animal pathologists A. B. Larsen and T. H. Vardaman followed Johne's disease for 12 months in a naturally infected purebred Guernsey herd of 100 adult cows and 6 young stock animals. No attempts were made at control during the period.

OF 18 ANIMALS culled during the year, seven were eliminated because of Johne's disease. That's as many head as were removed for reproductive disorders and more than the total taken out for all other reasons. The seven culled animals would have been worth \$216.60 a head for dairy use. But they had to be salvaged for a total of \$210 — a loss of \$1,306.20.

Milk was bringing about \$25 a head monthly over feed costs. Johne's disease shortened the lactation period about six months for the seven culled animals, causing a milk-production loss that amounted to \$1,050.

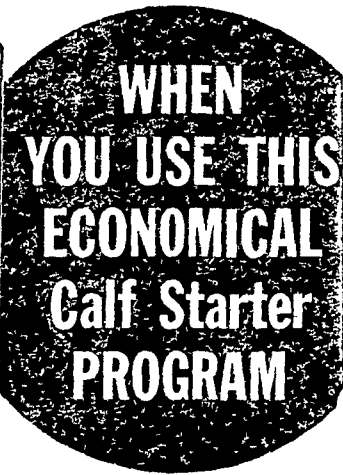
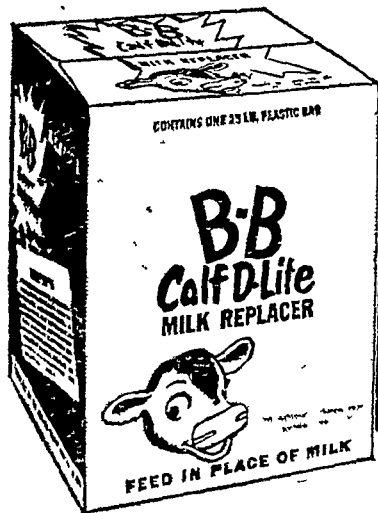
Furthermore, 15 heifers that normally would have been marketed at the end of the year as breeding stock had to be sold for beef because of the disease contraction in the herd. These heifers were valued at only \$100 a head for beef — or \$116.60 less than they would have been worth for breeding use. This was a loss of



ALTHOUGH MEDIUM grade steers can be fed out for a profit, they have several undesirable characteristics. They suffer from lack of size for their age. The animals tend

to be long and narrow and rough across the top. Fleshing is slight and tends to be patchy (LF Photo)

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SO THE ONE-year-bill for Johne's disease ran \$4,105.20 in this herd. Yet, herd owners don't ordinarily get excited about this disease. Usually, it spreads slowly, incubation takes a year or longer, only one or two animals are sick at a time, and the death losses occur irregularly.

Caused by bacteria known as *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, Johne's disease brings on recurrent scouring and unthriftiness. Infected animals waste away and eventually die. Their droppings carry the infective bacillus, which can live outside the body for a year or even longer. An animal may carry these organisms for years without showing signs of infection.

JOHNE'S DISEASE IS hard to deal with. We have no satisfactory treatment. Limited measures aid in control — slaughter accompanied by sanitation, and taking calves at birth and raising them on clean ground. Our experimental vaccines cause an animal to react positively to the johnin test and sometimes to the tuberculin test. Consequently, their use interferes with accurate diagnosis of both Johne's disease and tuberculosis. Johne's disease can't be established in small animals in the laboratory, and the organism is hard to isolate and grow in artificial medium.

Most frustrating of all, we don't have an absolutely dependable test. That's the main goal

in our work with the infected herd under study.

Every three months, each animal is given the standard johnin test (skin injection of sterilized liquid prepared from a culture of the causative bacteria, producing a swelling in reactors). At the same time, blood samples are taken from each animal for use in efforts to develop a different type of test. Intestinal specimens from animals sent for slaughter are examined microscopically for the germ that causes Johne's disease.

The researchers hope to learn more about its spread and the test-reaction pattern — perhaps even break through on diagnosing this disorder before the clinical signs appear.

12,288 Dairy Cows Exported in 1957

From July through December of 1957 a total of 5,163 dairy breeding cattle were exported from the United States according to latest figures of the Foreign Agricultural Service. January to June exports were 7,125 head bringing to 12,288 the total in the 1957 calendar year.

Mexico was the leading buyer of U.S. dairy breeding stock with some 2,137 going south of the border during the last six months. Nearly a third of these cattle were Holsteins from Minnesota.

Venezuela with 954 head, was the second large buyer and took slightly more Brown Swiss than Holsteins.

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1 to 3



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