

Dealing With Johne's From Experience

Editor's note: This is the second half of a two-part series on Johne's Disease. The first part, published last week, described the disease and its control. This article contains a summary of how three Lancaster County dairy farmers are battling the disease.

BY LISA RISSER

LANCASTER — After the initial shock, when the implications of the disease sinks in, dairy farmers with Johne's in their herd want to know one thing: how do I get rid of it?

Current estimates place the frequency of Johne's as high as one in every five Pennsylvania cows. More conservative estimates place the infection rate as 7.2 percent in Pennsylvania and in the Northeast.

Lancaster County has its share of Johne's-positive cows. Three producers troubled with the disease recently shared their experiences with farmers and veterinarians attending the Johne's informational meeting at the Farm & Home Center last week.

Millie Widmann and Axel Linde of Oxford, Paul Trimble of Peach Bottom, and Nelson Wenger of Manheim all are attempting to eliminate Johne's from their herds.

Widmann and Linde are a brother and sister team that farm Lindenhoff Farms, a registered Guemsey operation. They first discovered Johne's in their herd of 48 milking cows in April of 1983. A whole-herd test revealed that 16 out of the 42 were Johne's positive; that translates into 38 percent of the herd.

"The first thing we did was try to be present at the calvings," said Widmann. "We had a clean pen and clean cow, and the moment the calf dropped, we moved it to a clean stall. We hand strip the cow and feed the calf within 30 to 60 minutes. Thereafter we only feed whole-milk milk replacer."

Three weeks prior to calving, the cow is clipped at the tail, pins, udder, flank, and legs and moved to the clean pen. Newborns are placed under a heat lamp and rubbed with a towel, and as soon as they are dried, are placed into a hutch where they stay for two months.

In the summer of '84, Widmann and Linde had a 500-foot heifer barn constructed on a nearby hill. A Virginia-style enclosure, the heifer barn contains six pens in which the young stock stay until they are 12 months old. From there they are moved to another barn where they are watched for heats and bred.

"Any time we go to the calf barn we make sure our boots are washed off and that no manure is on them," said Widmann. "We also turn our sweatshirts inside out (when the newborns are moved) just in case germs might be on them."

The partners have been culling positive cows right from the start. Six of the original 16 were culled before the initial test results were completed. The other 10, for which Widmann and Linde received indemnity payments on nine, were sold immediately. The state only recognized nine of the 10 as positive and therefore eligible for indemnity. Using a tissue test of the

ileo cecal valve, state officials received a negative result on one animal.

Every animal, six months and older, is tested twice a year. Positives are culled immediately. "We've done 11 whole-herd tests, and we've reduced the number (of positive animals) with each test," said Widmann. "On the last two tests, we had four positive animals. We didn't take the indemnity on them because of all the paperwork involved and because the farm could withstand (the loss) financially. We also didn't take it because we knew there were other farmers out there who needed it more."

Widmann and Linde are awaiting the results from their last test, anticipating that it may not reveal any positive animals.

"The economic loss is difficult to estimate," she said. Among the losses the pair had include selling cows for meat instead of dairy purchases, keeping low producers in order to cull Johne's positive cows, and lower milk production. "Loss due to Johne's easily exceeds \$50,000 over the last six years," Widmann commented.

Paul Trimble has no idea how Johne's got into his 100-milking head Jersey herd. (See the April 30, 1988 issue of *Lancaster Farming* for a complete story on Trimble's battle with Johne's.)

His veterinarian diagnosed the first clinical case in the fall of 1985

and a whole-herd test was done nearly a year later. Although only one clinical case has been diagnosed in the past few years, he has culled more than 20 cows.

Like Widmann and Linde, Trimble has clean, freshly bedded maternity pens and he separates calves from cows as soon as possible. He too hand strips the cow and feeds the colostrum to the calf.

Trimble is very concerned about Johne's on both a private and a state level. "The economic losses attributed to Johne's disease are staggering," he stated. "If a farmer should have to disperse his Johne's-infected herd, it could mean financial ruin. The inability to sell registered dairy replacements, the genetic loss, and the losses of milk production all contribute to the wastage attributed to Johne's."

Trimble has called for the state to expand its testing facilities and indemnity program.

Nelson Wenger built an enviable herd of high-producing Hols-

teins only to have it invaded by Johne's. (Read the April 23, 1988 issue of *Lancaster Farming* for Wenger's complete story.)

He suspects the disease was introduced by a heifer that he purchased at a breed promotional sale in 1980.

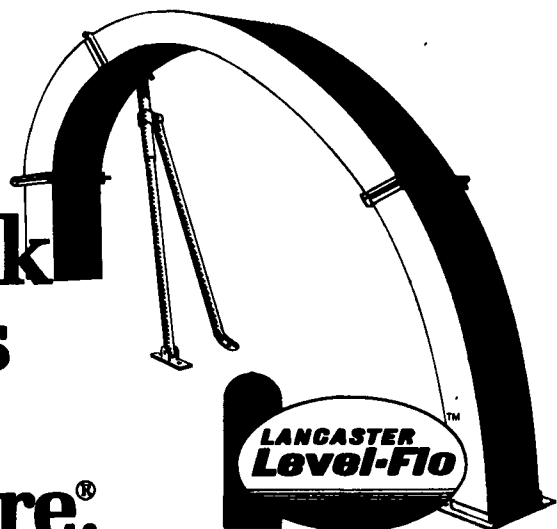
Wenger culled the first Johne's positive animal in 1984 and another 10 during the next two years before he and his vet realized what was happening. A whole-herd test performed in December of 1986 resulted in 14 positive animals out of 62.

He discovered that Johne's was partly being spread from barnyard runoff when the family garden and the calf hutches traded places. The hutches had been located in a field on the lower side of the barn and runoff was traveling through the hutches. The calf hutches are now in no danger of barnyard runoff.

As the three other farmers, Wenger attends calvings and separates calves from cows immediately. He, too, takes the time to clean the cows and pens before calving.

**MILK
AMERICA'S HEALTH KICK**

**Our
12 inch
gooseneck
improves
your
Harvestore.[®]**



Lancaster Level-Flo's replacement gooseneck lets you fill your silo faster and easier. It has a 33% larger capacity than original Harvestore[®] goosenecks and its high-profile shape improves flow. You can actually blow in 3 tons of haylage a minute without plugging the Level-Flo 12" gooseneck. Yet it attaches easily to standard 9" fill-pipe.

Our gooseneck's completely enclosed design keeps silage off the roof of your silo. Not only does this eliminate waste, it extends the life of the silo roof.

With an outer shell of galvanized steel, the Level-Flo 12" gooseneck stays bright and shiny for years. And it contains an inner liner of extremely wear-resistant stainless steel.

- Designed with final section straight and vertical to put silage in the center of your silo.
- And it's almost 50% less expensive than a Harvestore[®] replacement gooseneck.

Harvestore[®] is a registered trademark of A O Smith, Inc.

See your authorized Lancaster Level-Flo dealer.

**BADGER'S AGRI
SERVICE**

Dillsburg, PA
717-432-8377

**GLASS LINED
STRUCTURES**

Rothsville, PA
717-626-7456

**LAPP'S BARN
EQUIPMENT**

Gap, PA
717-442-8134

SOLO[®]

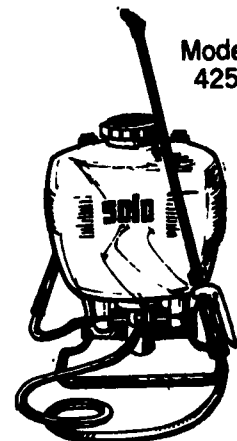
List \$119.95

Our Price **\$86.95**

Outperforms

If you need a backpack sprayer that's lightweight, dependable, and easy to handle...
Buy a SOLO #1 Worldwide.

Model
425



Parts - Sales - Service

Martin's Repair Shop

28 E. Trout Run Rd.
Ephrata, PA 17522
717-733-3015

Try the new 5 Gal. Models 435 or 485

Will Ship UPS \$3.00 Charge Master Card & Visa Accepted

STORAGE BARNs & GAZEBOS

— Custom Made To Order —



If You're Looking For Quality At A Good Price, Contact

B & B STRUCTURES

**DELIVERY
AVAILABLE**

Henry K. Blank
RD 1, Bird-In-Hand, PA 17505
(717) 656-0783
Dealer Inquiries Invited