



NYSCHAP NEWS

NEW YORK STATE CATTLE HEALTH ASSURANCE PROGRAM

JANUARY 2003

New and Improved NYSCHAP Website:

Visit the newly reformatted NYSCHAP web site at www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu. It is easy to navigate and all module materials are updated.

'What More Can You Say?':

Dr. Robert Scrafford, NYS Dept. Agriculture and Markets

Manorspring Farms, located in the scenic Mohawk Valley, has been in operation since the 1920's. A modest expansion about 10 years ago put it at the 105 milking cow level at which it is currently operated by its owner, Dave Bladek. In 1999, Dave and his veterinarian, Dr. Lisa Tobler of the Midvale Veterinary Clinic, decided that it was definitely time to do something about the Johne's problem that had cropped up with force since the expansion. By the time they set up a consultation with the New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program, Dave had lost a 14 month old heifer to acute, clinical Johne's disease.

After meeting with the local field New York State veterinarian (Dr. Robert Scrafford), Lisa and Dave outlined their situation, goals, and agreement on a plan to reduce the risks that could lead to the spread of Johne's on the farm, with the hope of reducing clinical incidence of the disease. How the disease is spread throughout the farm, specifically from infected cows to susceptible young stock, was discussed. Management practices that were risks were identified and changes were planned. However, not all changes were agreed upon immediately, nor taken up with vigor. Some testing was started to see just what the prevalence in the herd might be.



Farm Team (left to right): Gabriel Renda (herdsman), Mark Renda, Dave Bladek (owner), Dr. Lisa Tobler (veterinarian). Missing—Bill Smith

Blood testing was used for this screening, and the results, although not conclusive, showed over 50 percent of Dave's herd testing in the suspect range on the KELA ELISA. A small but significant percentage of these cows had values high enough to leave little doubt they were infected in a herd showing significant clinical disease. Dave lost an entire pen of heifers before their first lactation. He was losing dry cows before freshening and milking cows just fresh before an entire lactation could be sold from the bulk tank. Dave started implementing some changes with renewed determination.

By 2000, the blood tests showed only 1 – 2 cows as suspects, and these suspect numbers were not as high as many of those tested in 1999. Blood measures antibody response, and its interpretation can be difficult. Taken as a whole herd screen; however, Dave's numbers were encouraging. Dave buckled down even more.

By 2001 he started to see whole test sheets coming back in the negative range. With the low sensitivity of the Johne's blood test, some of these cows could have been infected, but the screening test found only 10% of the herd in the low end of the suspect range, a number not impossible in a non-infected herd given cross-reactivity inherent with the test. These findings correlated with the decreased clinical incidence. Dave was no longer losing heifers to clinical Johne's. In fact, with so few



NYSCHAP—Kathy Kaufman
Phone: 607-253-3910
Email: kdf2@cornell.edu
www.nyschap.vet.cornell.edu

first-calf heifers testing as suspects on blood, blood testing was put off until 2nd lactation and older cows.

Encouraged by the program's success, each year Dave has made improvements in certain management interventions. At first, the idea of a spotlessly clean maternity pen brought a roll of the eyes from Dave. Now his pen is yellow with dry straw, and he's planning on building a close-up pen and a second maternity pen for suspect animals. He's also purchased a new bucket for his loader, dedicated only to handling feed, reducing the time required to clean and disinfect the equipment between manure and feed handling. Calf rearing ventilation has improved, and biosecurity is enforced. Dave's calf mortality was nearly 0% in the last year.

This year, by 2002, Dave has culled only 4 animals for clinical Johne's on the farm. His prevalence is such that he has decided to try a year of fecal testing for its increased sensitivity, hoping to tighten a few management holes and work on controlling this disease to the point of no clinical cases in a year. He says, "If you settle for a certain level, the next thing you know the disease has taken off on you again. We're going to try to get it out." It's an ambitious

but admirable goal.

Dr. Tobler said she felt NYSCHAP is helping add an educational approach to a disease that affects many, many farms. She appreciates its help in setting up protocols for biosecurity, including the purchase of replacements.

When asked about NYSCHAP's role in the helping the herd, Dave said, "I've gone from losing heifers and dry cows to few clinical animals. What more can you say?"

NYSCHAP Testing Submission Forms:

As a reminder—when submitting samples for Johne's disease through the NYSCHAP discount, the NYSCHAP Test Submission form **must** accompany the samples to receive the discounted price. If you are unsure of what form to use or if you need another copy of the herd specific form please contact the NYS Animals Health Diagnostic Laboratory at 607-253-3900. Herd specific forms are generated at new enrollments and supplied to herd veterinarians.

Cornell University

NYSCHAP

Upper Tower Rd., PO Box 5786

Ithaca, NY 14852-5786