

# How Do Alberta Dairy Farmers See On-farm Johne's Disease Control?

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Having effective management practices in place is generally regarded as the best way to reduce Johne's disease (JD) on farms. However, despite extensive efforts from the industry to motivate adoption of best practices for improved JD management, dairy farmers often choose not to adopt recommended strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence whether (or not) dairy farmers implement JD prevention and control measures. Twenty-five farmers participating in the Alberta Johne's Disease Initiative (AJDI) were selected for the study. Semi-structured interviews with the farmers were conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed. A qualitative research approach (grounded theory) was used for farmer selection, interviewing and data analysis.

Results: Farmers differed in two main perceptions: 1) their belief in the importance of JD, and 2) their belief in recommended JD prevention and control strategies. Based on these two concepts, farmers could be categorized into 4 distinct groups: Disillusionists, Proactivists, Unconcerned, and Deniers. Farmers classified as Disillusionists or Proactivists regarded JD as an important topic, and were well informed about recommended control strategies. In contrast, farmers belonging to the two latter groups did not regard JD as an important issue and often had other priorities. Whereas Proactivists and Unconcerned generally believed in proposed JD management strategies, the other two groups often criticized their feasibility and effectiveness. Generally, farmers did not see JD control as "hot topic" in the communication with other farmers or their herd veterinarian. Also, many farmers (even if they had JD on their farm) did not regard the disease as a problem for their operation.

Implications: Dairy farmers are not a homologous group. Therefore, to elicit change, they should be approached according to their individual perceptions. The two main categories identified in this study can help veterinarians and stakeholders to better understand farmers' mindsets, and will facilitate communications with farmers.