



Doc Ken's Korner

Johne's Disease or Paratuberculosis

This is a chronic infectious disease of ruminants. Again, I have not seen this in buffalo, but I have had some firsthand experience in the late 60's and early 70's in cattle.

Johne's disease is caused by mycobacterium paratuberculosis. These type of organisms attack the mucosa or lining of the small intestine all the way to the rectum. Usually the disease is seen in adult animals (two to four years) and especially in females following calving. Calves are infected at a very early age. It only becomes evident that they have it when stressed by lactation and reproduction at a later age.

The symptoms seen are usually a gradual weight loss usually accompanied by a chronic diarrhea. Sheep and goats may even die without showing the diarrhea.

This disease is also spread by ingesting feces or feces contaminated feed or water.

The problem is some animals can carry and shed this organism for their entire life without showing any signs. Also, some animals may have and shed the disease for one to three

years before they become clinically ill.

The diagnosis must be done by one of the following:

1. veterinary using an intravenous Johnin test;
2. veterinarian using an intradermal Johnin test;
3. submitting portions of the small intestine (ileum and ileocecal valve) and neighboring mesenteric lymph node to a lab;
4. from feces in a lab.

There is no treatment for this disease.

However, both the animals that are in early clinical stages of the disease and the ones that are normal (but test positive) can be slaughtered. Some states even pay indemnity to cattle men... (good luck with buffalo!) Some states also allow use of an experimental vaccine which has some promise. For both of these you must check with your State Veterinarian to find out if your state has a program or not.

In cattle I always found internal parasites present in these herds and it seemed to me that if you got on a good worm control program and slaughtered all animals that showed early clinical signs that you were soon out of the problem. In a small herd you could also keep having the feces checked by a lab and remove those animals that test positive.

In the literature they suggest removing all young at 12 hours of age and raising them separately from the adults although this would be very difficult in the buffalo business.

If you decide to slaughter the whole herd then you should disinfect the premises and remain animal free for one year before restocking.

Almost always you buy this problem so be very careful in buying foundation stock or replacement animals. Ask questions... look at the whole herd, not just the animals you are getting... and, if you feel it is necessary, request a Johnin test.

Once you have your animal home, keep your animals in the cleanest, most spread-out area available.

If you feed, feed in racks or mangers to prevent fecal contamination.

Keep on a good nutrition plan and a good worming program. I noted in some of the literature that I reviewed for this that when deer show signs of Johnin's disease, they are usually parasitized as well. Many states are looking at a program for controlling this disease.

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Meat Demand Update

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following people have contacted the NBA seeking a supplier of buffalo meat in the past 2 months. If you can supply any of these areas I recommend that you follow up on these leads.

Patrick Underwood
2811 Jarrard
Houston, TX 77005
Josephine Kirley Ellis
Rt. 6 Box 348-5
Raleigh, NC 27612
Mrs. Robert K. Morrison
819 Coventry Rd.
Kensington, CA 94707
Mrs. Alfred Berndt
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Judith L. Howell
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Maquoketa, IA 52060
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Spokane, WA 99202
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Part Orchard, WA 98366
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Memphis, TN 38117
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Springfield, VA 22153
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