



NATIONAL JOHNE'S
EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 12, 2010

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New FREE Booklet Helps Sheep Owners Understand Johne's Disease

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO—Johne's disease is one of those mysterious sheep diseases where symptoms often challenge owners since symptoms for Johne's disease can be easily confused with symptoms for other diseases. And, while no one knows the number of infected sheep flocks in the United States, cases of Johne's disease have occurred in sheep raised for meat, milk and fleece as well as in 4-H flocks.

A new 16-page booklet developed by the National Johne's Education Initiative in cooperation with USDA-APHIS-VS, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison, shares facts about Johne's disease as it applies to sheep and sheep owners. Delivered in an easy-to-read format, the Q&A booklet provides answers to questions such as "What is Johne's disease?", "How do I know if my flock has Johne's disease?", "How can I help keep Johne's disease out of my flock?", "Should I test my flock for Johne's disease?" and more.

"This booklet focuses solely on Johne's disease as it relates to the sheep population and sheep owners," states Dr. Elisabeth Patton, chairman of U.S. Animal Health Association's Johne's Disease Committee. "Since there is no cure for Johne's disease and there is not an approved vaccine for sheep in the United States to help protect them from infection, education about Johne's disease, and the prevention of Johne's disease, is extremely important."

Dr. Michael Carter, National Johne's Disease Control Program Coordinator, National Center for Animal Health Programs, USDA-APHIS-VS, points out that symptoms of Johne's disease in sheep are vague and similar to other ailments: rapid weight loss. Adding to the mystery of the disease is that, although infection with *Mycobacterium avium* ss. *paratuberculosis*—the bacteria that causes Johne's disease—occurs primarily in lambs in the first months of life, signs of disease usually do not appear until the animals are adults. Despite continuing to eat well, adult infected sheep can become emaciated and weak and even die.

"Lambs are significantly more susceptible to infection than adults and often become infected by swallowing manure containing *MAP*—for example when they suckle manure-stained teats, drink milk that carries *MAP* or consume feed, grass or water contaminated with manure containing the bacteria," adds Dr. Becky Manning, Senior Scientist, Johne's Disease Information Center, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin. "Bottle-fed lambs can also become infected if the milk was contaminated. Johne's disease can spread swiftly through a herd, especially if the infection remains undetected for several lambing seasons."

Sheep owners and veterinarians can obtain a free copy of the new Johne's disease Sheep Q&A booklet by contacting their state Designated Johne's Coordinator, calling the National Institute for Animal Agriculture at (719) 538-8843 or by ordering the booklet online at www.johnesdisease.org.# # #



The National Johne's Education Initiative is a cooperative effort of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture, USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, in association with the National Johne's Working Group & United States Animal Health Association

