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Federal Government Invests in Health of Dairy Herds

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Canadian dairy producers can look forward to healthier herds, improved milk production and increased profitability with the support of the Government of Canada.

Gail Shea, Minister of National Revenue, on behalf of Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, today announced an investment of more than \$860,000 for the Atlantic Johne's Disease Initiative to test Atlantic dairy herds.

"Our government's top priority remains the economy, and the dairy sector plays an important role in keeping the Canadian economy strong," said Minister Shea. "This investment will help mitigate the impact of Johne's Disease on dairy herds, leading to increased production and a more profitable future for Atlantic dairy farmers."

Johne's disease, which does not affect human health, causes lower milk production in cows, higher herd replacement costs and higher veterinary bills. Caused by bacteria in the intestinal tract of cattle, the disease is difficult to detect, has no cure and is estimated to result in direct losses of about \$3,000 a year for the average dairy herd of 60 cows.

The three-year project will see 60 per cent of dairy cattle in Atlantic Canada screened for the disease. The test results will be analyzed by Maritime Quality Milk, a research centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College in Charlottetown, which is contributing over \$100,000 to the project.

The data will be used to develop better surveillance, risk assessment and disease management plans across the country.



Screening is now underway, and the project will continue until February 28, 2014.

"Detecting Johne's disease has always been difficult," said Harold MacNevin, chair of Dairy Farmers of Prince Edward Island, the organization leading the project. "This investment will lead to earlier detection of the disease in dairy herds and should help develop better tools to reduce its impact."

This investment is being provided under the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program, a five year program investing in new ideas and innovative projects to drive competitiveness in agriculture.

Tim Hofstra, dairy producer near Rollyview Alberta and Chair of the Alberta Johne's Disease Initiative Advisory Committee noted "Funding of this Johne's disease program in the Atlantic provinces reinforces the importance of producer efforts to address Johne's disease across Canada". This reinforces Alberta Milk's Johne's Disease initiative which now has 40 per cent producer participation.



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