



# Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic

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[www.dcvet.ca](http://www.dcvet.ca)

## Bovine Johnes Disease

Johnes Disease is a disease that typically presents as chronic diarrhea and severe weight loss in adult cattle. It can also affect sheep and goats. Calves are usually infected with the bacteria (*Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*) through the ingestion of water or feed contaminated with manure from adult cattle that are carrying the bacteria or from milk or colostrum from infected animals. The bacteria then usually hang out in the intestines of the animal for years (anywhere from 1-10 years) before it becomes active and clinical signs are seen.

Typically clinical signs are seen in cows 3 to 6 years of age. Cows will show signs of weight loss and watery diarrhea but still seem bright and have a good appetite. Signs can sometimes wax and wane. Unfortunately once the bacteria become active, they cause the intestinal wall to thicken, preventing absorption of nutrients and fluid. Cows typically lose weight until they waste away and can no longer function. Cows can shed the bacteria in the manure prior to showing clinical signs and in doing so infect calves.

Unfortunately there is no effective or practical treatment or vaccine at this time. This is a disease we see in a lot of herds in the Peace Country (and all across Canada). It can be economically important to producers. It can be a difficult and often expensive disease to test for, with tests ranging anywhere from \$8-90 an animal, depending on the number of animals tested and the type of test performed. If a producer has a goal to eliminate this disease from their herd, annual testing and culling can be done along with management changes but it can be a long process. Some simple management changes can help control the spread of this disease within your herd. Your veterinarian can do an on farm risk assessment, which will assess your herd's chance of getting or having various infectious diseases that can limit your production and profit. Your veterinarian can also help you implement any management changes that will help prevent or control the spread of disease in your herd.

For more information about this disease, feel free to contact one of our veterinarians at the Dawson Creek Veterinary Clinic.