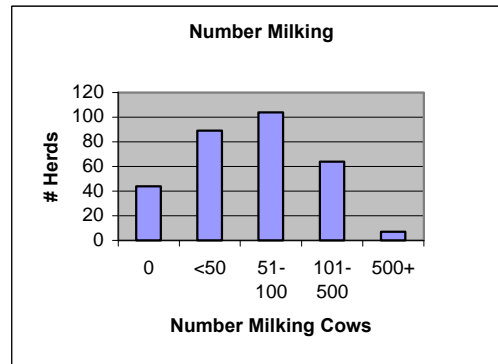
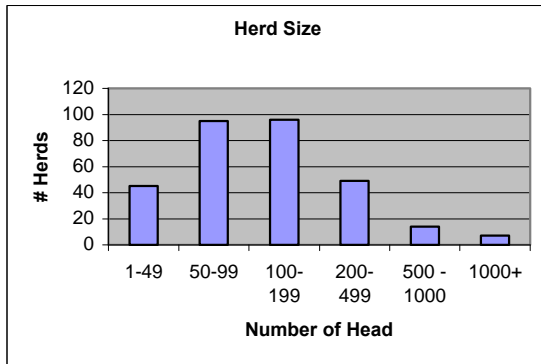


Cattle Health Improvement Project Survey Results



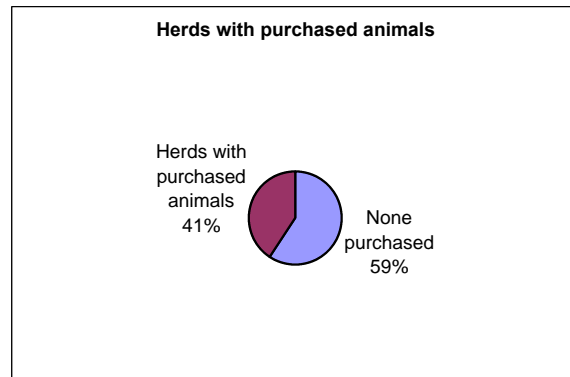
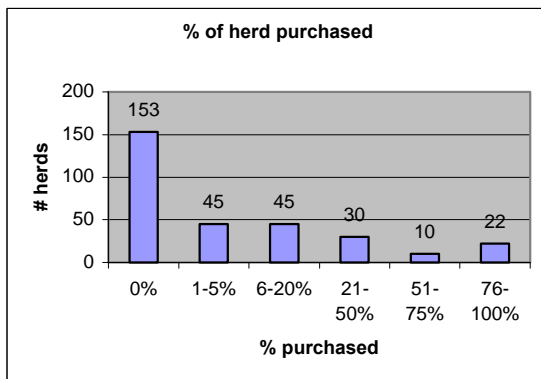
Of approximately 1800 surveys sent to both dairy and beef producers in the state, about 310, or 17%, were completed and returned. The purpose of the survey was to highlight some key concepts in cattle health management and disease control, to identify priority concerns for health risks on Vermont farms, and to determine the level of producer interest and need for cattle health programs. The questions asked in the survey were intended to reflect core concepts in cattle health management and disease control practices that can impact a farm's risk for disease.

Herd size of herds responding to survey



% of herd that was purchased

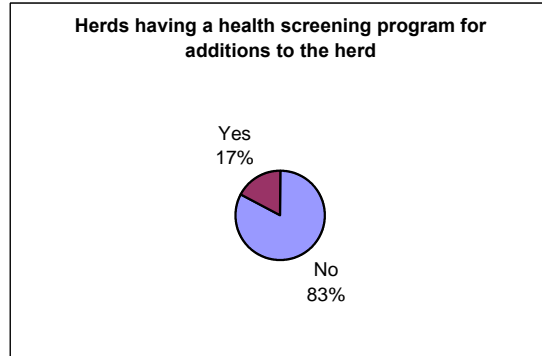
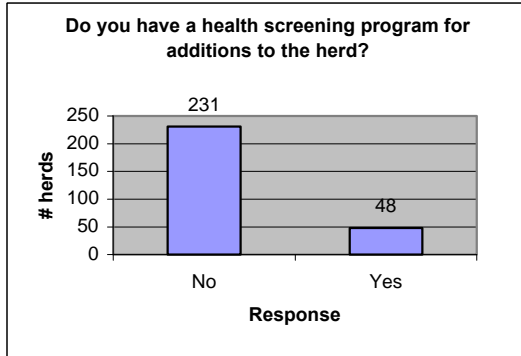
Purchased additions to a herd can represent a significant source of risk for introducing disease to a herd. Properly managing herd additions is an important and often overlooked aspect of maintaining herd health and disease prevention.



While a majority of herds reported having no purchased animals in the herd, the remaining 40%+ should be aware of the risk that purchased additions pose to their herd. Those with a higher percentage of purchased additions should find themselves at greater risk for disease problems.

Do you have a health screening or evaluation program for additions to the herd?

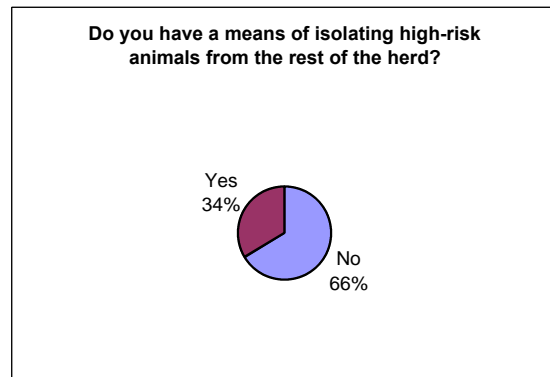
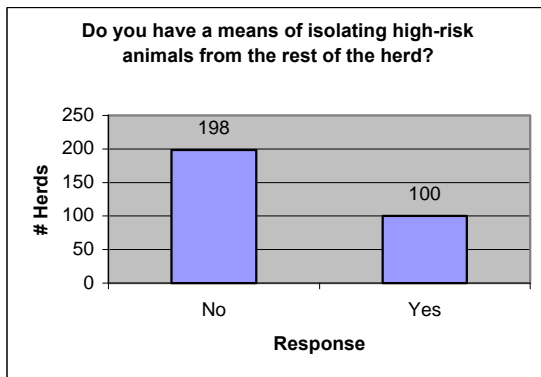
This question is important to consider for those herds making outside additions to their herd. Additions should be routinely screened for the presence of certain diseases and something should be known about their origin and health history before introducing them to a new herd.



83% of all herds reported having no health screening program for additions to the herd. Results were essentially the same for only those herds with purchased animals. This represents a significant source of disease risk for these herds.

Do you have a means of isolating high-risk animals from the rest of the herd?

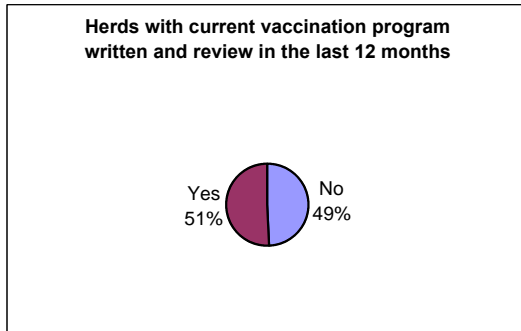
“High-risk” animals may include infected or suspected diseased animals, or animals from an unknown source or health status. An effective way of managing “high-risk” animals is to have a means of isolating them from other susceptible animals in the herd.



Herds reporting having no means of isolating high-risk animals from the rest of the herd outnumber those that do by a margin of 2:1. Therefore, a majority of herds expose themselves to greater risk for the introduction and spread of disease with no effective means of isolating high-risk animals.

Do you have a current vaccination program written and reviewed in the last 12 months?

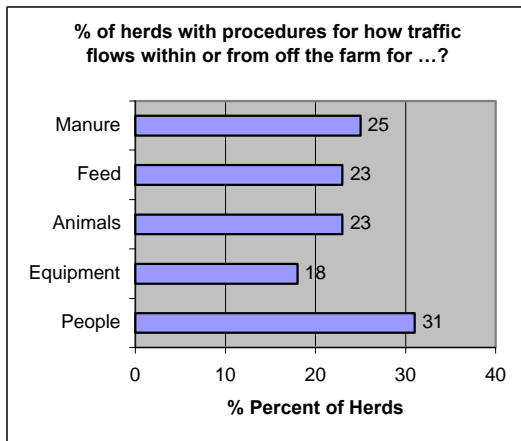
Routine vaccination is an essential part of herd health management and disease prevention. Herd vaccination policies and procedures should be well communicated, documented and reviewed on a regular basis. Vaccination in many herds can be hit or miss, or catch as catch can. Often, there is confusion about what has or is being done, by whom and when.



Almost half of all herds reported having no current vaccination program written and reviewed in the last 12 months. This would suggest that a significant number of herds may not be achieving adequate immunity for effective disease prevention and may be at risk.

Do you have policies or procedures for how traffic flows within or from off the farm for...?

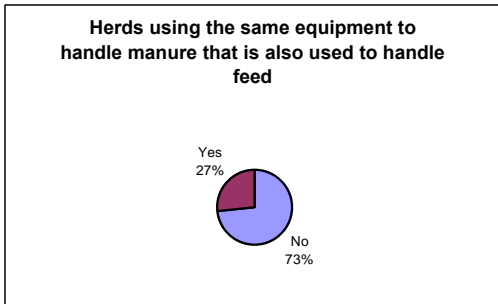
People, manure, feed, equipment, and animals can all act as vectors for the spread of disease. Therefore, movement and traffic flow of these things can play a significant role in spreading disease on a farm. There should be awareness among everyone of how the movement of potentially contaminated “things” on the farm, such as manure, can expose susceptible animals or contaminate feed and water.



A majority of herds, approximately 70-75%, report having no procedures for the movement within or from off the farm of all items mentioned. Not surprisingly, procedures for movement of people generated the largest positive response. Procedures for movement of equipment generated the least positive response. A majority of herds may be at risk for introduction or spread of disease through uncontrolled movement and traffic of potentially contaminated people, equipment, animals, manure and feed.

Is the same equipment that is used to handle manure also used to handle feed?

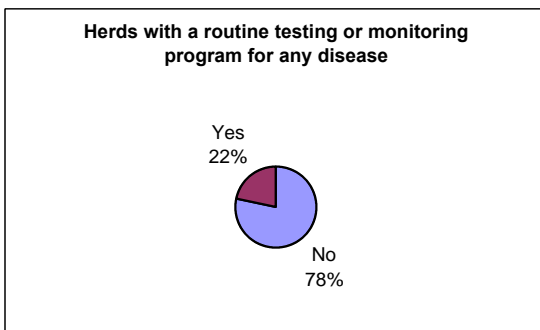
This is a common practice on some farms and can be a significant risk factor for spread of Johnes disease, salmonella, BVD and other diseases. As much as possible, this practice should be avoided or measures for effective cleaning and disinfection of equipment between uses should be implemented.



Nearly a quarter of the herds in the survey reported that they engaged in the high-risk practice of using the same equipment for handling manure as was used for handling feed. These herds should consider themselves at risk for spreading salmonella, Johnes disease or other diseases in their herds.

Do you have a routine testing or monitoring program for any disease(s)?

All herds have infectious diseases to deal with whether it be mastitis, Johnes, BVD, salmonella, hairy heel warts, scours, abortion or other disease. An effective part of a disease management plan is an established routine testing or monitoring program. Systematically identifying infected, high-risk or suspect animals is key to making effective management decisions to prevent and control spread of the disease on the farm. Regular monitoring is also essential for identifying trends to establish whether a problem is getting better or getting worse, as well as allowing you to make informed decisions about whether certain management changes have been effective or not. Milk culturing and SCC to monitor milk quality and mastitis is a common example.



A majority of herds report having no routine testing or monitoring program for any disease. Recognizing that many herds have a disease problem of some type, the results would suggest that many of them may not be able to manage their disease problems effectively without having established a routine testing and monitoring program.

Do you have any written standard operating procedures for disease management?

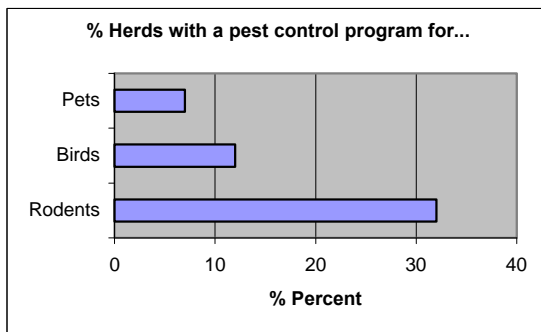
Written standard operating procedures, or SOPs, are an effective way of communicating to everyone what disease management practices are expected to be performed on a routine basis. Without them, you run the risk of people forgetting, not understanding and things not getting done the way they should. All herds should have a disease management plan with written SOPs.



Over 90% of herds report not having any written standard operating procedures for disease management. Some of these herds may be unable to implement disease management plans effectively because of ineffective communication without written SOPs.

Do you have a pest control program for rodents, birds or pets?

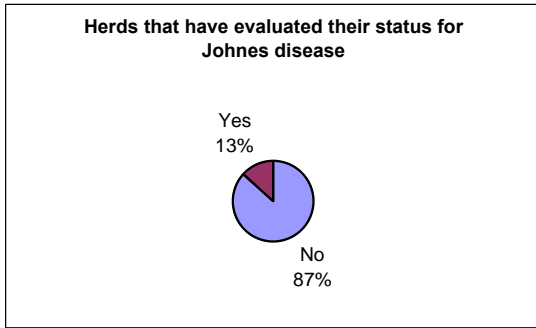
All of these critters are increasingly being recognized as significant sources for the introduction and spread of disease in herds. Effective control of these pests, including pets, especially their exposure to feed, can be an important part of controlling and preventing a disease problem. Salmonella and Neospora are prominent examples.



A majority of herds reported having no control program for any or all of the pests identified. These herds may run an increased risk for the introduction and spread of diseases such as salmonella if their populations run unchecked and have the opportunity to contaminate sources of feed and water.

Have you ever evaluated the status of your herd for Johnes disease?

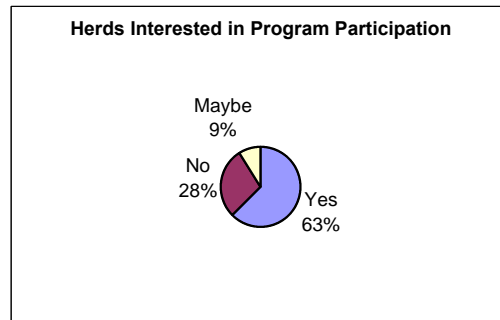
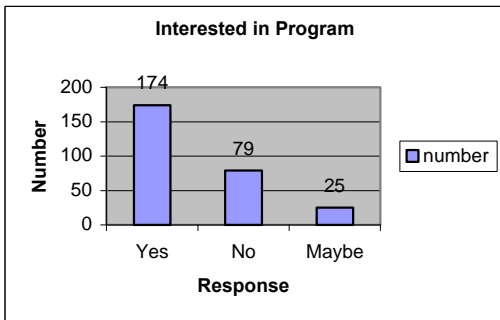
Johnes disease has become an increasing concern within the dairy industry and is having a significant economic impact in some of our herds. Evaluating your status for Johnes disease may reveal a significant problem you didn't know you had; it may identify the infection in your herd at an early stage before it becomes a more serious problem; or, it may allow you to establish your herd as being low risk for Johnes disease in order to add value to your animals and create market opportunities for breeding animals and replacements. Assessing your risk for Johnes disease is especially important for herds in an expansion mode where there is a great risk of introducing the disease from outside sources.



Only 13% of herds in the survey reported having evaluated their status for Johnes disease. As a result, many herds may not recognize they have the infection. They may lose an opportunity to get ahead of an early infection or to prevent its introduction and thereby avoid significant economic losses. Herds at low-risk may be missing an opportunity for adding value to their herd for marketing breeding animals.

Are you interested in participating in a program that would help you implement these concepts on your farm?

Many states have begun offering such programs to their cattle producers. The New York State Cattle Health Assurance Program is one such program that has had great success. The results of this survey demonstrate that there is a tremendous need for such a program in Vermont. Implementation of a comprehensive disease prevention and control program can help mitigate the identified risks where Vermont farms are vulnerable.



The Bottom Line

72% of the herds responding in the survey, almost 200 herds, indicated they either do or may have an interest in participating in such a program. This clearly establishes the interest and desire within our cattle industry for a comprehensive cattle health program. With many herds looking at expansion, there is a great risk for introduction of disease with addition of animals from unknown and outside sources. Active participation in an effective program promoting and improving preventive herd health and disease control practices can have an significant impact on improving and maintaining our farms viability, productivity and profitability.

Vermont Producers Responses to Animal Health Issues

Producers were asked to rate by level of importance a series of specific animal health issues in terms of their impact on them as a producer, its importance to the industry, its importance to consumers and public health, and finally its importance to their need to know more. The health issues considered included mastitis, Johnes disease, BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhea), BSE (Mad Cow Disease), FMD (Foot and Mouth Disease), Salmonella, hairy heel warts, Leukosis, Neospora, drug residues and beef quality.

Those health issues ranked in order of the greatest number of responses as being very important...

Rank	For its impact on them as producers	To the Industry	For their need to know more	to consumers and public health
#1	Mastitis	FMD	FMD	Drug Residues
#2	Drug Residues	BSE	Johnes	BSE
#3	FMD	Drug Residues	Mastitis	Salmonella
#4	BSE	Johnes	BSE	Beef Quality
#5	BVD	Mastitis	Salmonella	FMD
#6	Hairy Heel Warts	Salmonella	Drug Residues	Johnes

It should come as no surprise that mastitis would generate the most responses as being very important for its impact on producers. Mastitis continues to be the most important economic disease problem for many dairy farmers. Drug residues was a issue that was frequently rated as very important in almost all categories. This came as somewhat of a surprise but is encouraging that producers should consider it such an important issue. Among the endemic diseases, BVD ranked second followed closely by hairy heel warts and Johnes disease.

It is interesting that more producers rated Johnes disease as being very important to the industry than they did for mastitis. In fact, Johnes disease was also the endemic health problem most often rated as very important for their need to know more. Only FMD, a disease that does not exist in the US, ranked higher. Johnes disease has become an increasing concern for the industry and has become a serious economic problem for an increasing number of herds.

It is interesting that FMD (Foot and Mouth Disease) and BSE (Mad Cow Disease) were ranked so frequently as very important even though these diseases do not exist in this country. Undoubtedly, extensive media coverage of these issues overseas has brought them to the forefront of producers awareness along with an appreciation of how devastating they can be to the industry and to the individual producer.

Producers did an accurate job of identifying health issues that should be considered very important to consumers and public health with drug residues topping the list.

Leukosis and Neospora consistently stood out as the two health issues that producers knew the least about. Neospora has only relatively recently been recognized for its impact on herd health as a cause of abortion and association with production losses. While Leukosis has been recognized for a long time, its importance and impact has not been an issue of great concern to most producers.