

University based research plus university based entrepreneurial support may lead to important vaccine



Adel M. Talaat

An associate professor in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Department of Pathobiological Sciences, Adel M. Talaat became chief executive officer of [Pan Genome Systems Inc.](#) [1] That was in August 2011. Less than a year later, the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded the company an SBIR grant to develop vaccine candidates to prevent and control Johne's disease. In addition, Talaat has secured a contract from Saudi Arabia to work on a vaccine specifically for camels.

Johne's disease causes an estimated \$500 million economic loss per year in the United States. Pronounced "YOH-nees," Johne's disease is also known as paratuberculosis, reflecting the bacterium that causes the fatal contagious gastrointestinal disease.

The disease affects "ruminant" animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, deer, antelope, bison and camels. The University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine estimates that 68% of dairy herds in the United States have at least one infected animal.

That explains why the USDA awarded the \$100,000 grant to help Pan Genome Systems commercialize university-based research. Adel has had an assist along the way from a university-based entrepreneurial program: the [Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Network](#) [2] (WEN). WEN is one of two programs managed by UW-Extension's entrepreneurship and economic development division.

"WEN was a great resource for me when I started my business," Adel says, specifically referring to Cheryl Vickroy, a regional director and, as of June 2012, also interim director of WEN. "Without the help of WEN and Cheryl, I would not have been able to start this business. Cheryl was very instrumental in my decisions on how to start the business, how to hire people, how to find a location for the business and how to go about grant writing and soliciting funding from federal agencies and venture capitalists."

While Johnne's disease is the corporation's first focus, Adel explains that Pan Genome System's work could develop better diagnostics and vaccines to serve both human and animal health.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.pangenosys.com/>

[2] <http://www.wenportal.org/index.htm>

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