

Latest all-island BVD map displays progress of BVD eradication programmes across the island of Ireland

A map produced by the Centre for Veterinary Epidemiology and Risk Analysis (CVERA), University College Dublin, displaying the distribution of herds with positive test results for BVD virus, shows the marked progress made by the ROI and NI BVD Eradication Programmes to the end of 2022. These programmes are similar in design, based on mandatory testing of tissue samples collected and submitted by herd owners using tissue-sample enabled national identity tags. The programmes became compulsory in ROI in 2013 and in NI in 2016, with both being overseen by stakeholder Implementation Groups. The anonymised maps are an outcome of ongoing collaboration between Animal Health Ireland (AHI) and Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) who co-ordinate the respective programmes, and DAERA and DAFM.

AHWNI chief executive Dr Sam Strain commented, “The maps demonstrate the substantial advances that have been made in tackling BVD through both Programmes. The animal-level incidence of BVD within NI has fallen by over seventy percent since the start of the compulsory programme to 0.264% in 2022, with these being found in 3.76% of herds. Crucially, the number of Persistently Infected animals that have been retained following identification has dropped dramatically in the last year, thus reducing the infection pressure on affected farms and their neighbours. This reflects the enormous efforts of farmers and industry partners in addressing the infection, despite the limited resource and legislative tools currently available to address all the infection risks that are present.

However, there are areas with higher levels of infection in NI particularly along the Co Armagh border with Co Monaghan. AHWNI continues to engage with all farmers who are dealing with BVD breakdowns to encourage eradication of the virus at the farm level. Ongoing concerted action is required by all stakeholders in the Programme so that the BVD virus can be eliminated as quickly as possible.”

AHI Programme Manager Dr Maria Guelbenzu commented, “During 2022 only 0.031% of calves tested returned a positive result, with these being found in only 308 (0.45%) of all breeding herds in ROI. This highlights the significant progress made since 2013, when 0.66% of calves from almost 9,000 herds tested positive. 2022 was the first year in which any county recorded no positive results, with this honour going to Carlow. This progress is testament to the ongoing effort and commitment of participating farmers and wider stakeholders. The programme continues to make progress during 2023. At the end of July, 2.1 of the 2.4 million calves (88%) due in 2023 had been tested, with positive results returned from fewer than 200 herds. County Carlow remains free to date, joined by County Sligo, while a number of other counties have only a single herd with positive results.”

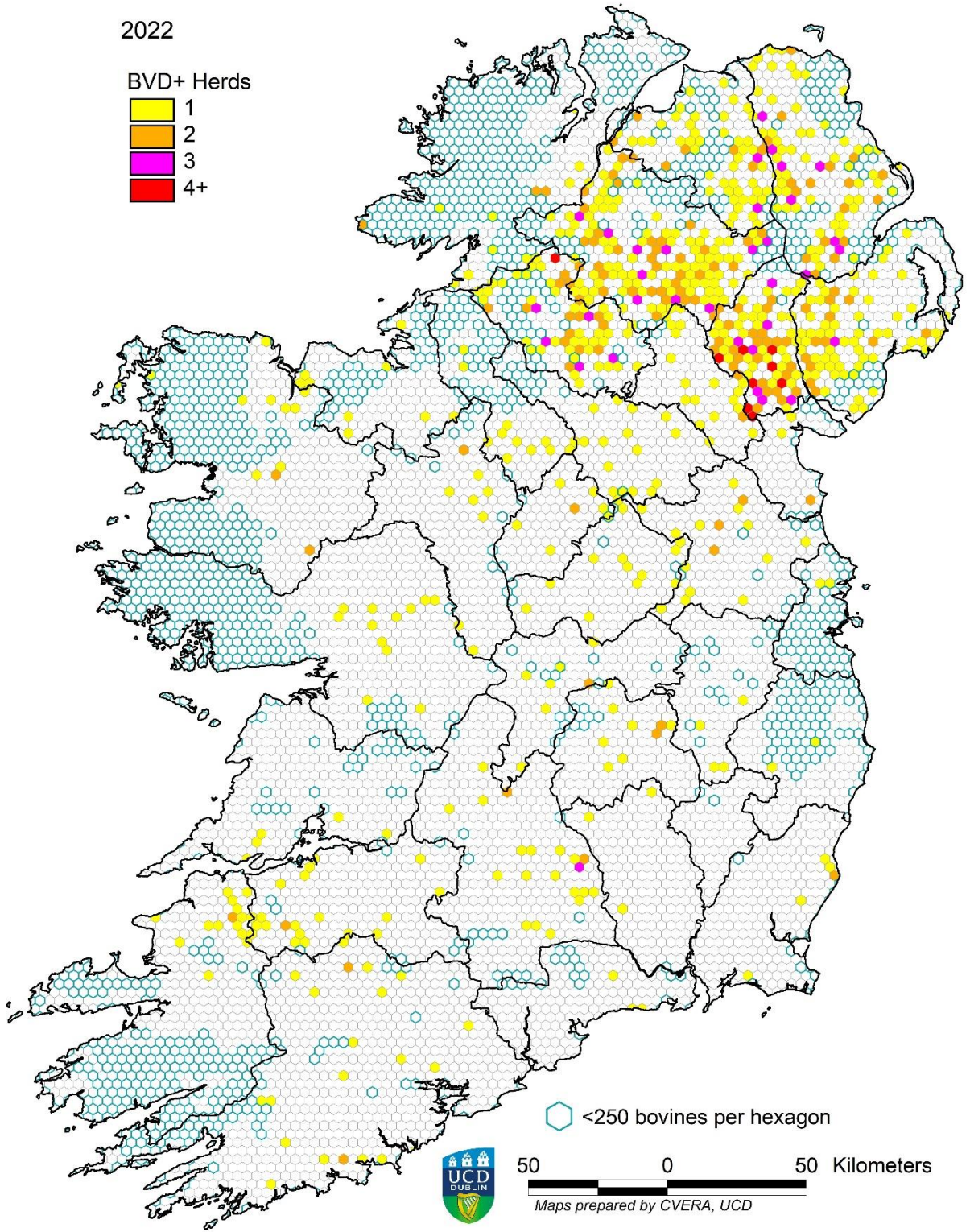
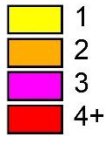
Dr David Graham, chief executive of AHI, commented “Following approval of our eradication programme by the European Commission in 2022, the goal is now to reach the position where an application for recognition of freedom can be made. For both programmes, continued implementation of key measures is required to ensure further progress. It is vital that calves continue to be tagged and samples submitted promptly for testing, allowing infected calves to be identified and removed as quickly as possible, alongside efforts to prevent accidental transmission of BVD virus to other herds. This may occur through the movement of animals which may be undergoing a transient infection, or which are pregnant and carrying a persistently infected calf. Transmission may also occur via contact at boundaries, or through movement of contaminated equipment or people between herds, including professional visitors, staff and farm family members, in the absence of appropriate hygiene measures. While it is important that all herds take measures to prevent accidental introduction of infection, the

higher levels of infection in NI, as compared to ROI, mean that herds in border regions, particularly in Monaghan and Louth, need to be especially careful, given their proximity to infected herds in NI.”

ENDS

2022

BVD+ Herds



 <250 bovines per hexagon

50 0 50 Kilometers



Maps prepared by CVERA, UCD

Notes for editors

1. The maps are based on anonymised data and fixed sized hexagonal units and show the number of herds with positive results, allowing local patterns to be seen. Each hexagon represents 10 km², with a radius of less than 2km.
2. Work is ongoing to generate updated maps for the first 6 months of 2023.
3. Updated figures for both programmes are published regularly at http://www.animalhealthni.com/page.aspx?page_id=39 and <https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/bvd/programme-results/>, with a series of monthly maps for ROI only available at <https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/bvd/bvd-maps/>
4. AHI have recently published renewed guidance on biosecurity, which is available at <https://animalhealthireland.ie/assets/uploads/2023/04/AHI-Bulletin-April-2023-FINAL.pdf?dl=1>
5. Approval by the European Commission of the ROI programme imposes increased requirements for animal movements, including those from NI, to prevent introduction of infection. DAERA have published guidance of these requirements at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/bvd-requirements-export-cattle-eu-member-states-approved-bvd-eradication-programme-or-bvd-free>
6. For further information, please contact:

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