

Current BVD hotspot areas in Armagh

There are currently several BVD hotspot areas in Co Armagh that are giving rise to concern, as these areas have a higher disease incidence and therefore a higher risk of the BVD virus spreading within and between herds. Over a quarter of all herds that were retaining BVD Positives in Northern Ireland at the start of October 2021 were in Co Armagh, and in the past 12 months the highest percentage of BVD Positive animals was in the Armagh DVO area.

Overall, over 40% of all herds that had BVD breakdowns in the past 12 months were in the Armagh, Enniskillen and Newry DVO areas. During this time, disease levels in Co Fermanagh have been significant compared to other parts of Northern Ireland. In the 12 months preceding the end of September 2021, in dairy herds, at the animal level, Enniskillen DVO had the highest percentage of initial positive or inconclusive results in NI, at 127 animals, (0.66%), a level that was over twice the average for dairy herds. During the same period, Enniskillen DVO also had the highest number of beef herds affected, at 61 herds.

Research analysis has shown that the retention of BVD positive calves doubles the risk of having further BVD Positive calves during the following season. Retaining these animals also increases the risk of spread to neighbouring herds. Animals that are Persistently Infected with BVD should be strictly isolated and then culled as soon as possible.

Farmers are advised to take steps to maximise biosecurity measures on their farms, to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus into their herds, as neighbouring herds can pose a disease threat. Preventing cattle contact across boundaries is vital; the breaking in of cattle to neighbouring stock has been identified as a plausible source of infection in several local BVD outbreaks. Herd owners may wish to discuss the option of vaccination with their vets, if it is applicable to their circumstances.

Industry continues to request that new legislation is brought in by DAERA that would allow BVD breakdown information to be shared with at-risk herd keepers, to allow them to tighten biosecurity measures in order to reduce the risk of the BVD virus being transmitted to their livestock.