

BVD Positive Numbers at lowest point since start of Scheme



The number of BVD Positive (BVDP) cattle alive in NI is the lowest seen during the lifetime of the compulsory programme. Latest figures show that, while there have been approximately 1,400 BVDPs disclosed during the last 12 months, this month there were 58 living BVDPs in 45 herds, and of these 17 were being retained for more than 4 weeks in 15 herds.

Prompt identification and removal of cattle that are Persistently Infected (PI) with BVD are the keys to BVD control, so the fact that cattle with suspected infection are being dealt with quickly will reap dividends in allowing progress to be made towards eradication. Effective 'distancing' of known BVD Positive cattle as soon as possible after the receipt of Positive results, until they either receive a BVD Negative result on a retest or are culled, is necessary in order to reduce the risk of spread of the virus. Of particular concern on breakdown premises is the potential of transmission of the BVD virus to in-calf stock. Isolation can reduce the likelihood of the virus circulating in the herd and thus shorten the length of time for which it is present on the farm.

Infected cattle must be isolated within housing and there should be no direct or indirect contact with other susceptible animals. Isolation premises should have a separate airspace and separate drainage from other farm buildings and there should not be any sharing of equipment (including handling facilities) or utensils with other groups of stock. Good hygiene by stockpersons is of vital importance.

The BVD Implementation Group continues to encourage and support the measures being taken by industry to accelerate the culling of PIs, namely prompt communications to affected farmers, with opportunity for discussion and investigation of outbreaks, the voluntary abattoir ban and the retention of a Positive constituting a non-conformance in the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme.

Industry awaits the outcome of DAERA's herd restrictions consultation with interest. In the absence of herd restrictions, the prevalence of disease has not decreased in the way that either the Programme or NI cattle farmers had hoped for. Due to the EU Animal Health Law, there is a growing need for basic information on herd level BVD statuses to be introduced in NI as an enhancement to the Programme and industry continues to make representations to DAERA regarding essential developments that are necessary for achieving the eradication of BVD.

Note for editors:

1. AHWNI is responsible for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme. For more information on the operation of the Scheme, please contact AHWNI (email info@animalhealthni.com, tel. 028 7963 9333) or visit the AHWNI website www.animalhealthni.com.