

AHWNI RELEASES BVD LOW RISK HERD INFORMATION

AHWNI has commenced the release of information to almost 900 herd owners whose herds are deemed to have a BVD Low Risk Status.

When the NI BVD programme was introduced in 2013, the intention was that with time Low Risk Status herds should be identified and the information shared with herd owners. The introduction of BVD statuses on to APHIS this year has allowed the production of a list of herds that meet certain Low Risk herd criteria, which are:

1. All cattle in the herd and associated herds over 5 weeks of age have a BVD Negative status (applied directly or indirectly)
2. Herd has joined the programme more than 3 years ago
3. No BVD Positive animals have been identified in the herd in the preceding 12 months.

The criteria used at present to identify Low Risk herds may be changed in the future, for example to meet external trading requirements.

Going forward, AHWNI will inform herd owners when their herd enters the Low Risk category. It is expected that the number of eligible herds will increase over time, as disease incidence decreases and as farmers realise the advantage of 'filling in the gaps' in their stock's BVD status profile. The status profile of a herd can be accessed through the AHWNI database (using a government gateway ID and password) or BVD statuses may be viewed on APHIS-on-Line herd lists. It is also possible for the Low Risk Category to be removed, should there be any cattle in the herd over 5 weeks of age that do not have a Negative status, or if BVD infection is disclosed.

AHWNI advise that in order to maintain the Low Risk Status of a herd, it is vital that biosecurity practices are taken seriously. Significant disease risks occur when animals are added to herds or when there are contacts with neighbouring stock. Farmers are encouraged to discuss with their veterinary surgeon any potential changes that might affect their herd's biosecurity and issues such as whether or not to vaccinate against BVD. Vaccination will not prevent the BVD virus entering a farm, however it can reduce the impact of accidental introduction.

The release of Low Risk Status information is the first step in moving to more cost-effective testing streams for ear tissue tag samples from these herds. Such a shift will be a decision to be taken ultimately by approved tag suppliers and laboratories.

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.
2. A series of Biosecurity Information leaflets are available for information on the AHWNI website:
 - Bio-exclusion: Keeping Infectious Diseases out of your herd
 - Understanding Infectious Disease
 - Preventing Disease Spread within your farm
 - Purchasing Stock: Reduce Disease Risks.