

Guidance on dealing with cattle that have not been tested for BVD

Which animals in my herd need to be tested for BVD?

Under the Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) Eradication Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2016, all calves born on or after 1st March 2016 should be tissue sampled within 20 days of birth and the tissue sample should be dispatched to an approved laboratory within 7 days of taking the sample for testing for BVD virus.

Calves that are to be reared and finished in their natal herd before going directly to slaughter should be tested for BVD within 20 days of birth.

The tagging requirement also applies to aborted bovine foetuses, stillborn calves and calves that die before being tagged.

How can I check the BVD status of my animals?

In order to verify the BVD status of all animals recorded in your herd, you can check your APHIS herd list. It is necessary to sample untested animals to determine their BVD status: a sample should be taken from each animal by using a supplementary ear tissue tag or by getting your vet to take a blood sample from the animals concerned. The samples should be dispatched to an approved laboratory within 7 days of collection.



Are movement restrictions in place for untested animals?

Untested animals born on or after 1st March 2016 may not be moved from your farm until they have been sampled and negative test results for the relevant samples have been obtained from an approved laboratory.

What is the benefit of testing for BVD?

BVD is a highly contagious disease of cattle that can be spread directly (from animal to animal) or indirectly (for example, by contaminated equipment or visitors).

The BVD virus causes a range of significant effects in herds, including fertility problems (more 'empty' cows than expected, abortions, birth defects in calves), poorly thriving animals and increased levels of calf scours and pneumonias that do not respond to treatment.

Calves that are BVD positive may appear healthy, particularly at birth, but represent a significant risk of infection to other animals in your and neighbouring herds.

Failure to cull BVD positive calves increases the risk of having further Persistently Infected animals (PIs) during the following year, because contact between virus-shedding PIs and susceptible pregnant cattle is likely to lead to the birth of further PI calves. Any female PIs that do go on to reach breeding age will produce PI calves. This means that the infection is likely to persist into subsequent seasons, prolonging its detrimental effects on animal health and survival.

The price paid for each bovine tag in NI includes the cost of the BVD test. By not getting a BVD test result for an animal, you could be missing the identification of BVD infection in your herd and the opportunity to take steps quickly to deal with it.

What steps should I take to deal with older animals that have not been tested for BVD?

Cattle that were born before the start of the compulsory programme (ie before 1st March 2016) that do not have a known BVD status are worth checking: in many cases, only a small number of samples may be required to complete the herd profile.

For those farms that have a full BVD Negative profile and have not experienced BVD infection within the last year, the focus must continue to be to safeguard the herd. In order to maintain a BVD Negative herd profile, it is essential that biosecurity practices are taken seriously. AHWNI encourages all herdowners to speak with their vet to assess the risk of infection getting into their herd and what measures they can take to prevent this from happening.

Do imported cattle need to be tested?

In addition to homebred animals of unknown BVD status needing to be tested, animals that have been imported may have an unknown BVD status on the AHWNI database and may also require testing. However, any imported animals that were tested for BVD at a laboratory approved for the NI scheme may have their BVD results transferred to the NI BVD database – contact the AHWNI helpdesk for more information. For animals imported from the ROI, a BVD Negative status may have been obtained from ICBF and uploaded to APHIS. **Please check animal BVD statuses on an APHIS herd list or contact AHWNI if you have queries.**

Why do we need to keep testing for BVD?

The BVD Programme's aim is that every eligible animal in the NI cattle herd should have a direct Negative (BVDN) or indirect Negative (INDINEG) status, so that the BVD virus will be eliminated from the NI cattle population.

To find out more contact the AHWNI helpdesk on (028) 7963 9333 or email info@animalhealthni.com or log onto www.bvdni.com



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