Retained BVD PI numbers fall below 200

The number of retained BVD Positive animals in Northern Ireland has fallen below 200 for the first time, with the latest drop being strongly attributed to recently introduced Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) measures.

Figures from July 1st show that there are currently 421 BVD Positive animals alive in NI in 285 herds. Of these, 192 BVD Positive cattle in 128 herds have been retained on farm for more than 5 weeks. Retained PI numbers have fallen by over a quarter during June, largely as a result of the new BVD standard in the FQAS.

Over 100 FQAS members who had retained PI cattle were contacted by the LMC last month. Retention of a PI is a non-conformance under the Scheme Rules and farmers have three ways of resolving the issue with the LMC:

1. By e-mailing confirmation that the animal has been registered as dead on APHIS on-line
2. By confirming that the animal is in the 'DEAD' herd on an APHIS 'Moved Out' list (available from local DVOs)
3. By providing evidence that the BVD Positive animal has been found Negative on a retest.

The number of BVD Positive cattle alive at any one time fluctuates as new cases emerge and other cases are culled. However, the overall pattern for the NI Eradication Programme is that the prevalence of disease at the animal level has reduced significantly since the compulsory programme was introduced.

BVD Positive animals should be isolated to avoid further transmission of the virus to susceptible animals (particularly breeding stock) in their own and neighbouring herds. Veterinary advice is to cull these cattle at the earliest opportunity. Movements of BVD Positive animals to marts, other farms or export are prohibited. There is also a voluntary abattoir ban in place on accepting BVD Positive animals born on or after 01/03/2016 for slaughter.

Industry's aim is to eradicate this costly disease from NI to reduce animal health and welfare problems including infertility, abortions, calf pneumonia and scours, and to improve farm profitability.