Animal Health & Welfare NI
BVD Eradication Programme
www.bvdni.com

Farmers urged to test cattle of Unknown BVD status

Farmers are being encouraged to test cattle of unknown BVD status (BVDUs) as soon as possible, to establish whether they are infected with the BVD virus, in particular before going to a mart or sale, to avoid being turned away. The number of NI BVDU cattle over five weeks of age that are required to be tested under the compulsory BVD Programme is approximately 14,000 at present.

These animals are restricted within their herd on APHIS until a sample has returned a negative test result from an approved laboratory, so they should be tested using a supplementary tag or a blood sample taken by a private vet. There are also over 500 imported cattle that do not have a BVD Negative status recorded against them currently. AHWNI can carry out checks on imported (BVDU) animals against ROI BVD status data, where an approved laboratory has been used, to establish whether a negative BVD status can be uploaded to APHIS for these animals without the need to carry out further tests.

From a disease control perspective, it is industry's aim that every bovine animal in NI should have a direct Negative (BVDN) or indirect Negative (INDINEG) status. Farmers can look at their APHIS herd list to check the BVD profile of their herd, as BVD statuses are displayed against individual animals.

BVD is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle: all PIs shed enormous amounts of virus and pose a very significant risk to other cattle on their holding as well as to cattle on neighbouring premises, so their identification and removal is the key to disease control. For this reason, farmers should test their cattle for BVD to ensure that no reservoir of virus exists on the farm.

Cattle born before 1st March 2016 that do not have a known BVD status should also be tested. There are approximately 8,500 animals in this category in NI. Only a small number of tests may be required to complete the herd picture in many cases.

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. No calves born into a herd that has been free of BVD during the last year should be PI, unless the BVD virus has been introduced, for example through the purchase of pregnant animals carrying unborn PI calves, contacts with neighbouring stock or by infected material being carried on to the premises by people or on equipment.

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