



Fewer than 100 herds retaining BVD Positives

For the first time in the history of the NI BVD Programme, the number of herds retaining BVD Positive cattle for more than five weeks has dropped below 100 herds, to 81 herds with a total of 118 Positive cattle on 1st December 2020.

The current figures are remarkable considering that at the start of 2020 there were 381 retained cattle in 264 herds, so, while numbers fluctuate, they have fallen to one third of what they were in less than 12 months. The introduction of the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme non-conformance for retention of BVD Positive animals for more than five weeks from the disclosure of results has had a very significant effect in reducing numbers.

Welcoming the latest figures, Dr Sam Strain, Chief Executive of Animal Health & Welfare NI, commented, “The marked decrease in the number of retaining herds demonstrates how herd owners in NI have taken the messages seriously on the risks that BVD presents and have acted to protect their herds by following veterinary advice to cull BVD Positive cattle.

“While it is known that BVD cases will continue to emerge, due to the fact that infection of some dams during early pregnancy has already occurred, there is no question that the amount of virus circulating on NI farms is decreasing dramatically. In order to eradicate this costly disease, all farmers need to play their part in stamping out the virus, by taking prompt action when BVD Positive or Inconclusive cattle are disclosed in their herd and by taking steps to maximise the biosecurity of their herds.”

Despite the progress that has been made, industry stakeholders continue to call on DAERA to introduce measures that have been successful in other BVD eradication programmes, in order to accelerate progress towards eradication. These measures include the introduction of movement restrictions in affected herds and the issue of neighbour biosecurity notifications, so as to reduce the risk of the virus being transmitted to other cattle in their herd of residence, or to neighbouring herds. Restrictions and the provision of targeted veterinary advice should further encourage farmers to comply fully with the current guidance to put down or retest cattle suspected of being infected with the virus.