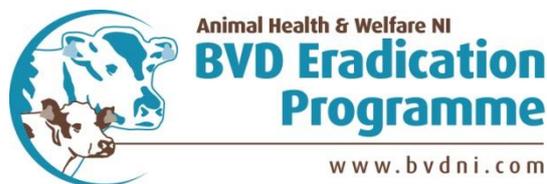


Significant progress of BVD Programme during 2020



Latest BVD Programme data shows that the prevalence of BVD infection at the individual animal level has fallen by over a half and that herd level prevalence has fallen by almost two thirds since the commencement of the compulsory phase of the NI BVD Programme. Over 800 NI cattle herds had BVD Positive results disclosed during 2020, compared to almost 1,000 herds in 2019.

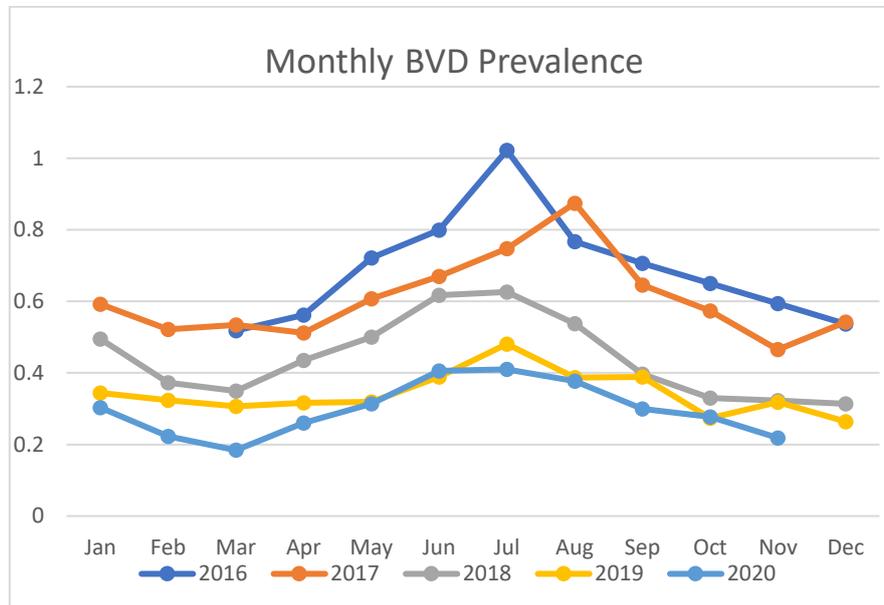
After the first year of the Programme, at February 2017, the rolling 12-month animal prevalence of BVD was 0.66%; by the end of November 2020 it had fallen to 0.29%, a decrease of 56%. During the same period, the percentage of herds with initial Positive or Inconclusive results has fallen from 11.46% to 4.27%, demonstrating a decrease in the proportion of herds affected by the disease of 62%.

These results are encouraging and have occurred thanks to many herd owners making responsible decisions to isolate and cull calves that have been identified as being persistently infected (PI) with the BVD virus. BVD is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle, and as all PIs shed massive amounts of virus, they pose a major risk to other cattle on their holding as well as to cattle on neighbouring premises, so identification and removal of PIs is the key to disease control.

The culling rate for bovine animals with virus Positive results has increased, with the latest data showing that 83% of all BVD Positive calves born during October 2020 were disposed of within 35 days of results being obtained, the highest level seen in the Programme to date. This acceleration is largely due to the introduction of retention of BVD Positive cattle as a non-conformance in the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme.

The graph below shows how BVD prevalence has fallen year-on-year throughout the lifetime of the BVD Programme.

Graph showing monthly prevalence of BVD in NI cattle from March 2016 to November 2020:



In those herds where the eradication of BVD is being taken seriously, as the level of circulating virus decreases, it becomes increasingly important for farmers to follow good practice in biosecurity protocols, including more checks before buying in stock and, in consultation with a veterinary practitioner, consideration of vaccination in certain circumstances.

Overall, farmer compliance with the programme has been excellent. During the year, all stakeholders have continued to work well together to achieve the progress that has been made, with consensus on the strategy being pursued. Efforts are being made to bring in new legislation that will strongly discourage PI retention, with the focus remaining firmly on BVD eradication.