

RETESTING

What age does the calf have to be for retesting with blood ELISA tests?

The tissue tag test is the most suitable for testing young calves. Blood samples from very young calves may not be reliably tested by ELISA due to the possibility of false negative results caused by interference from maternally derived antibodies (MDA) and for this reason negative results from such animals are considered valid only if produced by a RT-PCR test. Typically, this applies to calves up to 75 days of age, although the lower age limit for ELISA testing should be confirmed with individual laboratories before submitting samples to them. This period is often referred to as the “diagnostic gap”. Samples submitted for confirmatory testing are processed appropriately using protocols that take this diagnostic gap into account. The ELISA currently in use for testing ear punch samples is marketed as not having a diagnostic gap, although it is possible that these may occur occasionally. Should a false negative result be suspected, you should isolate the animal in question and contact the testing laboratory with a view to arranging a re-test.

What is required for confirmatory blood testing?

Blood samples must be submitted to an approved lab for confirmatory testing. All labs approved to carry out confirmatory testing are listed on the AHWNI website. Confirmatory testing will only be conducted on blood samples collected by a veterinary surgeon. A submission form for these samples is included with the letter that you will be sent identifying animals to be tested. This form must be returned with the blood samples. You will be liable for any testing and sample collection costs incurred. Blood samples from young calves must be tested using specified protocols to ensure accuracy of testing. These protocols are typically more expensive than those used for ear punch samples or blood samples from older animals.

How long does confirmatory testing take?

Designated laboratories undertake to report 95% of results within 7 working days with a median turnaround of 5 days or less. In practice, many results are reported more rapidly.