

PROGRAMME DETAILS

Does a farmer who has no disease problems and is not vaccinating for BVD, still need to participate in the programme?

Yes. Under The Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2016 all calves born on or after 1st March 2016 must be tagged and tested for BVD.

Will herds be able to achieve a BVD-free status within the programme?

Through successive rounds of tag testing, direct (subjected to BVD testing) and indirect (mother of one or more calves that have tested negative) results for each animal in the herd accumulate. With time, all animals in many herds will have either tested negative or have produced a virus-negative calf demonstrating them to be non-PI. In other herds, a few animals of unknown status may remain, which can then be identified and tested. AHWNI and the industry BVD Implementation Group is currently seeking ways to recognise compliant herds that have been testing in the BVD programme and have a high probability of being uninfected.

If blood testing in a CHeCs programme for BVD accreditation, will I have to do the tissue tag test?

Yes. Under The Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2016 all calves born on or after 1st March 2016 must be tagged and tested for BVD. Herds participating in the CHeCS programme typically use check testing for antibodies of 5-10 animals from separately managed groups aged 9 – 18 months to screen for possible presence of infection in the herd. The use of tissue tag testing however provides a definitive result for each individual animal, demonstrating that animals with a negative test result are non-PI. The majority of herds participating in CHeCS programmes are pedigree, and are possibly already testing stock to provide virus-negative results for breed society sales. It is possible to generate a declaration of negative results for animals tested within the programme via the AHWNI database for this purpose. The CHeCS technical document has been updated to specifically recognise tissue testing of calves as an acceptable alternative surveillance method for achieving and maintaining accredited BVD free and BVD vaccinated monitored free status within CHeCS programmes.

I have previously tested my herd for BVD. Can these results be entered on the AHWNI database and do I need to take part in the programme?

Results from previous BVD testing may be transferred to the AHWNI database by arrangement with the testing laboratory. This will only be available where testing has been carried out in a designated laboratory using an appropriate accredited test, and where full traceability of the result to an animal is possible. Typically, this will require samples to be blood samples which have been collected by your vet and which have been submitted with their full official identification numbers. The laboratory will require the necessary data sharing permissions to be given by the herdowner before the transfer of results can proceed.

Herds that have conducted testing prior to the launch of the compulsory programme in 2016 are still required to perform tissue tag sampling. Under The Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2016 all calves born on or after 1st March 2016 must be tagged and tested for BVD. While such earlier testing will hopefully have provided strong reassurance that infection was not present in the herd, testing of calves is necessary as an on-going means of surveillance within the programme and to provide negative results to enable animals to be traded.

For how long will the programme run?

The programme in Northern Ireland is based on programmes that have run, or are running, successfully elsewhere. However, successful delivery within the optimal timescale will require farmers and the wider industry to engage and cooperate fully with the programme. Where PI calves are identified early and removed quickly it is likely that the disease can be eradicated quickly. Where this does not happen the rate to achieving eradication is likely to be slowed.

Is the programme open to abuse?

The farming industry will be the beneficiaries of a successful eradication programme. The ultimate success of the programme lies at the hands of our farmers. While it is not possible to prevent all abuses of the programme, it is hoped that any such abuses will be infrequent. The introduction of legislation, policing of the programme by DAERA and the facility to investigate the mis-association of dams and their calves following tissue tagging should be effective deterrents.

Are there penalties for abusing the programme?

Specific legislation (The Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2016) has been introduced. Breach of this legislation will lead to prosecution. Knowingly selling a BVD positive animal may lead to imprisonment for up to one month or receive a fine of up to £5,000 or, in the case of more than five animals, receive a fine of up to £1,000 per animal under the Diseases of Animals Order. Anyone found guilty of selling an infected animal may also be in breach of the Sale of Goods Act which could result in further financial penalties.

Is compensation available in the Compulsory Phase of the Programme?

There is no compensation available during the compulsory phase. However a financial incentivisation scheme to encourage the removal of PI animals was in place from 01 February 2017 to 30 September 2017.

How do I access my BVD results?

In order for a herd owner to access their BVD results online, go to <http://www.animalhealthni.com>

and click on the  button. Enter your Government Gateway ID (issued by DAERA) and password in the appropriate box to log into the AHWNI results database. If a herdowner requires assistance with finding these log in details, they should contact the DAERA helpline on 03002007855. It is possible for a herdowner to view all of their testing results and print negative results declarations from within this database.

All of my cattle have negative BVD statuses – why do I need to keep using the ear tissue tag test?

While the prevalence of the BVD virus has reduced significantly, the virus has not been eliminated from NI and therefore still presents a risk to cattle. Prompt identification of PI calves is vital to the success of the eradication scheme, so that they can be removed promptly. Scientific advice indicated in 2018 that for the ROI programme (which commenced three years before the NI programme), there would be drawbacks in moving away from direct (tissue tag) testing and more limited opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of the current programme. The options for moving towards an indirect programme will be kept under review by the BVD Implementation Group. In Low Risk status herds, every precaution should be taken to prevent entry of the BVD virus.