

Northern Ireland BVD Virus Eradication Programme

New Compulsory Legislation is on its Way:

It will be illegal to sell calves born on or after the 1st March 2016, unless they have tested negative for BVD.

What is BVD?

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle. It can be spread directly by infected animals, or indirectly, for example by contaminated equipment or visitors.

BVD virus causes significant financial losses to farmers in NI and threatens exports.

Testing of Calves will be simple:

Testing will be carried out using official ID ear tags. Where PI (positive) calves are detected in a herd, further testing is required using blood samples.

The identification and removal of persistently infected animals is key to eradication.

It will be the seller's responsibility that all calves presented for sale have a negative test result.

To find out more contact AHWNI helpdesk on (028) 87 789126 or email info@animalhealthni.com or log onto www.bvdni.com



**Animal Health
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Compulsory BVD Control Programme Starts on 1st March 2016

All cattle borne on or after 1st March 2016 will have to have a BVD test carried out. Animals born on or after this date will only be permitted for sale if they have a valid negative test result.

What is BVD?

BVD virus is the cause of an important disease of cattle that is estimated to cost Northern Ireland farmers in excess of £20 million each year.

How does it affect cattle?

BVD is a major cause of infertility, abortion and weakly new born calves. BVD predisposes cattle to other diseases such as pneumonia and is a significant cause of on-farm antimicrobial use. Some calves born to infected dams become persistently infected. Most of these calves will die before reaching slaughter weight.

How is it spread?

Calves become persistently infected (PI) when their mother is exposed to the virus during the second to fourth month of pregnancy (or if the mother is PI). PI cattle are the main source of infection within and between herds.

How can it be eradicated?

The key is to identify and remove PI cattle from the national herd. This can be done cost-effectively by testing ear punch samples collected by you as part of the official identity tagging process.

How does the programme work?

When you receive official tissue tags one of the tags will be specially adapted to collect a tissue punch during the tagging process. (Note: a new applicator may be required). The cost of the test is included in the purchase price. Samples must be sent to the laboratory using the envelope supplied with the tag within 7 days of the sample being taken. Testing the calf in this way also tests the dam of the calf. Results will be issued by AHWNI using SMS (text) messages and/or letters and will be available within the AHWNI database which can be found at www.animalhealthni.com. Results will only be available once calves are registered on APHIS.

What do the results mean?

In most cases calves will test negative. This indicates

that the calf and the dam of the calf are not PIs. Where BVD virus positive calves are detected, you will have the option to confirm them as PI using a blood test or a supplementary tissue tag taken at least 21 days following birth. The dam of the calf will also require a follow-up test which should be arranged with your veterinary practitioner.

What happens to PI calves?

While apparently normal at birth, PI calves usually become ill-thrifty and die before reaching slaughter weight. During this time they remain a source of infection for other cattle, which may lead to infertility and abortions in cows and the birth of further PI calves. It is recommended that PI cattle are culled as soon as possible after being identified.

What should I do if I'm selling calves?

Vendors selling animals born on or after 1st March must provide evidence that the animals for sale have a valid negative BVD test. Animal test declarations can be downloaded and printed from the AHWNI website (www.animalhealthni.com). Purchasers should ask for a test declaration certificate for each animal being purchased that has been born on or after 1st March to assure themselves that the purchased cattle are BVD free.

I've been testing for BVD, why should I have to continue testing?

The BVD control order will require all herdowners to 'Tag and Test' all calves born on or after 1st March 2016. This will include those herds that have been testing within the voluntary phase of the BVD. For those herds that have successfully controlled infection during the voluntary phase, the purpose of this ongoing testing is to ensure, firstly, that infection is not re-introduced into the herd and, secondly, that PI animals are not inadvertently sold onwards as a result. While legislation will require all herds to test their calves, AHWNI is currently seeking ways to recognise herds that have been testing for three or more years and have a high probability of being uninfected.

Where can I find out more information?

Information is available from the AHWNI website and office and from your local veterinary practitioner.



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