



## **NI BVD Programme passes two million test mark**

During January 2019, the number of BVD tests carried out by NI farmers during the voluntary and compulsory phases of the Eradication Programme passed the two million mark. The Programme has resulted in herd level prevalence falling by over 38% since the end of the first year of the compulsory programme.

The benefits of eradicating BVD from herds include decreased costs of production (through reduced costs in tackling the disease and fewer losses), increased resilience to other diseases and improved cattle welfare.

Overall, farmer compliance with the tag and test requirements of the compulsory scheme has been excellent. However, a relatively small number of herd owners have not been testing their calves in a timely manner or disposing of BVD PI calves and these actions hamper the scheme's progress. Recent analysis has shown that 541 BVD Positive animals in 356 herds have been retained on NI farms for over 5 weeks and of these 462 have been alive for over three months. A total of 689 BVD Positive animals were recorded as being alive at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019.

There are currently over 15,000 homebred cattle aged >35 days, in approximately 3,300 herds, born during the lifetime of the compulsory scheme, that have a BVD Unknown (BVDU) status. Under the current legislation, all calves born on or after 01/03/2016 should be tissue sampled within 20 days of birth and the tissue sample should be dispatched to an approved laboratory within 7 days of taking the sample for testing for BVD virus. Untested animals may not be moved from a holding until they are sampled and a negative test result for that sample obtained from an approved laboratory. Calves that are to be reared and finished in their natal herd before going directly to slaughter should also be tested for BVD within 20 days of birth.

AHWNi can carry out checks against ROI BVD status data (thanks to a collaboration with ICBF) on imported animals from the ROI, to establish whether a negative BVD status can be uploaded for these animals.

As spring calving gets underway, farmers are encouraged to take ear tissue samples as soon as possible after birth (as soon as the calf is dry). Early sampling of calves reduces the possibility of inadvertently detecting transiently infected calves that have acquired infection after birth. Farmers with BVDU status cattle in their herds should test them as soon as possible using a supplementary tag or blood sample taken by their vet, so that PI cattle can be identified and culled at the earliest opportunity, allowing more rapid progress to be made towards the eradication of BVD.