

Scotland prepares for new phase of BVD eradication

Scotland is preparing for the fourth phase in a nationwide Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication programme.

SAC Consulting veterinary investigation officer Katy Hewitson says good progress has been made, with 83 per cent of herds in Scotland currently having a negative status.

From June 2015, herds with a 'not-negative' or 'unknown' status will be under restriction and animals will only be able to be moved (other than direct to slaughter) once they have been individually tested as negative for BVD.

For herds with a 'not-negative' status, the testing options will be reduced to either a calf screen or a whole herd screen. Only negative herds will be able to use the 'check test' option and, in dairy herds with year-round calving, check tests should be performed every six months.

There is a case for farmers in other parts of the UK to think about eradicating BVD from their own herds too, says Miss Hewitson.

"The disease can cause a great

deal of economic loss where present – the costs of increased susceptibility to pneumonia, diarrhoea, poor growth rates, deaths of aborted or neonatal calves and losses of older, persistently infected animals which rarely thrive can mount up.

"A BVD antibody check test is the simplest method of determining whether there has been recent activity of the virus in the herd. This involves blood sampling five animals from each separately managed group of stock aged nine-18 months.

Results

"In certain circumstances where there is little risk of interference from colostrum antibodies, the check test may be performed in animals aged six to nine months. To achieve reliable results in these animals, the sample size is increased to 10 animals per management group and it works best in herds where there is little evidence of historic BVD [low levels of antibody to BVD in the cows].

"Where calves have been given a respiratory vaccine which contains BVD, sampling should ideally be left for three months



Scotland is beating BVD, with 83 per cent of herds free of the disease, says Katy Hewitson.

after completion of the vaccine course to avoid interference with the test."

To be considered a management group, cattle selected for the check test must have been mixing for at least two months. If there has been no mixing between groups or fields of cattle, testing only young stock from one group will not necessarily reflect the situation in another. There may be several separate groups even within a single shed if there is separation by feed partitions and pen divisions.

"A calf screen involves either testing calves for BVD from birth using ear tissue collected from special ear tags, which can be done by the farmer, or from one month of age using blood sampled by the vet," says Miss Hewitson.

Advice for staying BVD free

HERDS which are free of BVD virus are in category 1 or 2. These must ensure biosecurity measures are in place to prevent BVD infection entering. Farmers are advised to:

- Ensure any cattle brought into the herd are free of BVD. In the upcoming fourth phase, a farm's status will be suspended if an animal of unknown BVD status enters

its breeding herd – this means some farmers selling cattle to Scottish breeding herds may be asked by the buyer for pre-movement testing

- Ensure the herd cannot come into contact with cattle of unknown BVD status
- Discuss the correct administration and timing of vaccines with their vet to ensure stock are protected

"In this way, BVD virus carrier animals in newborn calf group can be identified and removed from the herd at an early stage, reducing the risk of further spread of disease.

"If evidence of exposure to

BVD virus is found in the check test or calf screen, then, where eradication is pursued, further testing is required to identify the source of the virus, which is likely to be a persistently infected carrier animal in the herd."

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Current Scottish status procedure

At present, test results from Scottish herds are collated and the BVD status of herds and individual animals are registered on the ScotEID database. The status of a herd or animal can then be queried

using the holding number or an animal's 12 digit ear tag. Herds are categorised in to one of three risk categories.

MORE INFORMATION
See www.scoteid.com