

Maintaining zero BVD requires more than one 'tool'

Firm handle on BVD eradication

Producers are being encouraged to take a more comprehensive approach to BVD control in order to eradicate this costly and devastating disease. It involves status surveillance and decisive action, depending on that status. A vaccination programme or milk test will not achieve this single-handedly.

text **Karen Wright**

It's likely that the dairy industry will hear more about plans to eradicate Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) in England and Wales in 2013. The Government is considering a national control scheme, consultations are underway by the Cattle Health and Welfare Group and funding to support an education programme has been allocated to DairyCo and EBLEX. All cattle units in Britain may soon be within BVD schemes.

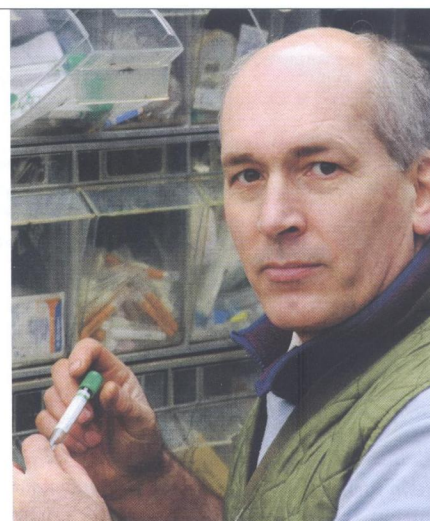
BVD can cause major reproductive losses with a huge price tag in cattle. The main reservoir for infection is via persistently infected (PI) animals. These can reside in the herd as 'trojan cows' for many years,

re-infecting any susceptible animals. PIs are born as a result of infection of the dam at between 40 and 120 days into pregnancy. Virus will persist in the herd if PIs exist, even if the herd has a strict vaccination policy.

Eradication – not just control

Cheshire vet Neil Howie is encouraging producers and fellow vets to use a combination of tools, which are available now, in an on-farm programme to tackle BVD. "Eradication is the name of the game – not just control," he says.

"We have to get across the fact that vaccination alone won't eradicate BVD.



Neil Howie: "We have the tests to eradicate BVD so why wait?"

It is a valuable part of the programme, but it is not a long-term solution."

The US is an interesting example. It has been vaccinating cattle for 40 years, but BVD is still rife. However, Germany and Switzerland set up more comprehensive schemes three years ago, which involved tissue testing and herd surveillance, and the disease is all but eradicated from both these countries.

That's not to say that BVD is history. The highly contagious nature of the disease means that routine surveillance has to be part of any eradication programme, at least until PI animals have been eliminated. Switzerland reduced the level of PIs from more than 1.35% in 2008 to less than 0.05% in 2012. It will now be promoting on-going surveillance to ensure any remaining PIs are removed. But Mr Howie says that producers shouldn't wait for the Government to

