

UK lagging behind on BVD control

By Chrissie Lawrence

Even though UK figures suggest at least 90% of cattle herds have suffered a problem with bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), recent research shows only 11% of farmers admit they have it on their farm. Even more alarming, more than half of farmers take no specific measures to prevent BVD entering the herd and only 23% vaccinate.

Royal Vet College's Joe Brownlie told delegates at the BCVA Congress, Southport, that the UK had to work hard to develop a national strategic plan to battle BVD. "Figures from a recent questionnaire sent out to both farmers and vets showed a considerable knowledge gap on the disease, with 35% of vets stating an obvious need for more literature and only 30% of farmers associating diarrhoea and abortion with the disease."

And with European countries such as Scandinavia and Austria almost clear of BVD and the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Spain rapidly following suit, Prof Brownlie stressed that the UK was being left behind. "There are huge export



The UK must work hard on a strategic plan to eradicate BVD, but a better understanding of the disease is needed first.

opportunities out there, providing we can tackle the disease and eventually eradicate it," he said.

"Farmers need more support from vets in understanding BVD, with a greater emphasis on the importance of culling and vaccination. Too many farmers feel it can be eradicated with vaccination alone, which isn't the case."

But with pilot eradication programmes set up in East Anglia and Somerset and soon to be introduced in Scotland, the UK had started the process, he said. "Farmers are beginning to recognise how economically crippling the disease can be to herds and interest in testing and culling is strong in these areas. The next step will be to promote

better biosecurity methods between neighbouring farms, create a better understanding of persistently infected [PI] and non-PI cattle and following the history back to cows that have produced PI calves and cull them."

* For more information on the BVD eradication pilot programmes, see *Farmers Weekly* 8 December.