

# BVD eradication – the first steps in a thousand have been taken

**Richard Gard** reports on regional initiatives to control this disease



**A BOVINE VIRUS** diarrhoea eradication programme for Norfolk and Suffolk has been well received by farmers and veterinary surgeons.

The chairman of the steering group, James Alston, indicates in the first newsletter that the expectation was to enlist 30 farms, but over 70 had become involved and more farmers were asking to participate. The steering group is made up of a Norfolk farmer, Eddie Brigham, with a Norfolk vet, Andy Larwood, together with a Suffolk farmer, David Burroughs, and a Suffolk vet, Mike Bardsley.

Technical support is led by Professor Joe Brownlie of the RVC; laboratory facilities and expertise is provided by George Caldwell and his team at the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC).

The regional BVD eradication programme involves screening for the presence of the disease within herds, and then setting up a bespoke, practical, biosecurity and control programme, in the form of a health plan for BVD.

The programme can be tailored to any farm and any situation. Over 60% of the Norfolk/Suffolk herds have been found clear of BVD. Further monitoring of these herds will take place with the aim of achieving BVD-free accreditation.

Information is becoming available about a two veterinary practice scheme in Somerset where 70% of the herds tested are infected. There are therefore considerable regional differences and both initiatives form part of a planned National BVD Eradication Campaign.

By mid April, 71 farms had enrolled on the Norfolk and Suffolk scheme; 54 herds had been tested and 34 had passed at the first test with 18 failing and two with indeterminate results (meaning that further testing is required to complete the initial screen).

The steering group points out that many farmers do not realise that their herds are infected. Uninfected herds are expected to be at significant risk. Control of BVD at farm level is possible and the disease could be eradicated if the industry as a whole co-operates. Herds with BVD suffer infertility and reproductive disorders. Pneumonia and scour are seen as a consequence of poor health. Mucosal disease is not uncommon.

BVD may be insidious and protracted and the farmer gets used to living with the problem in the herd, to the point where the effects go unrecognised until the infection is controlled.

Interested farmers are advised that BVD is perpetuated by persistently infected (PI) animals, described as a calf born with BVD

because its mother was exposed to the disease during pregnancy. The virus passes to the unborn calf and the animal may live for many years without showing signs of the disease, but carries the virus, which puts the herd at risk. The control programme depends on the identification and removal of PI animals. Protection of uninfected herds becomes easier as more farms control BVD.

The BVD campaign is being run by the farming industry for the farming industry. Enthusiastic farmers from Holstein UK are pioneering the Norfolk/Suffolk Initiative. Financial support for the BVD campaign has been received from EBLEX and NOAH, with further assistance from Pfizer, BCVA, the RVC and DEFRA.

It is seen as important that the campaign is carried forward as a true partnership of interested and committed industry groups. Bulk milk testing and young stock tests are on-going and support is required for co-ordination of the BVD eradication campaign and for education.

Attendance at veterinary practice and farmer meetings has been excellent and the programme has started with zest. Other regions are expected to wish to develop their own initiatives.

Further technical details are available at [www.sac.ac.uk/consultancy/pchs/bvdnorfolksuffolk/](http://www.sac.ac.uk/consultancy/pchs/bvdnorfolksuffolk/). The progress of the campaign on some farms is being followed by the farming press. For a copy of the newsletter, to discuss support for the campaign, to develop regional programmes and practice schemes, or simply to consider BVD issues, contact Professor Brownlie via Lisa Harber at [lharber@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:lharber@rvc.ac.uk).

## RUMA guidelines on cattle vaccination

The recently completed RUMA *Guidelines on the Responsible Use of Vaccines and Vaccination in Dairy and Beef Production* were officially launched at Beef Expo 2007 in Skipton on May 18. Introducing the launch, the chairman of RUMA, Peter Allen, said that these were the last in a series of species guidelines on vaccines.

"The vaccination guidelines available for pigs, poultry, sheep and fish have already been seen by the farming industry as a helpful step in ensuring the implementation of health planning at farm level. These cattle guidelines form the last of the set and illustrate the positive involvement of the industry in promoting the health and welfare of food producing animals and their use in safe food production."

Launching the guidelines, Skipton and Ripon MP, David Curry, who is also chairman of Dairy UK, said: "The messages are, simply: that best practice in the use of veterinary medicines is a prerequisite for the better protection of animal health and welfare; and that the freedom of livestock products from unacceptable veterinary residues cannot be guaranteed without medicines being used responsibly."

**A symposium on the "Practical control of Johne's disease" is to take place on September 12 and 13 at the Midland Hotel, Manchester. National and international speakers, together with veterinary surgeons in practice, will be presenting information and experiences. The symposium is sponsored by Virbac. For further details contact Ken Sibley at [ksibley@virbac.co.uk](mailto:ksibley@virbac.co.uk).**