

Correct timing of BVDv vaccination

When is vaccination necessary?

There is a need for BVD vaccination on certain farms, to produce a protective immunity in breeding cattle. The immunity gained will mean that the negative effects of the BVD virus on fertility and the birth of Persistently Infected calves can be avoided. While the incidence of the BVD virus in NI is decreasing, it is important to be aware that there is an accompanying decrease in natural immunity to the virus (due to reduced exposure), so vaccination can be useful if there is a lapse in herd biosecurity.

It is important to realise that the available BVD vaccines will not provide 100% protection in all circumstances, even when stored and used correctly, particularly where pregnant cattle are exposed to high levels of BVD virus.

Discuss BVD vaccination with your vet

Any decision to vaccinate your herd should be taken in conjunction with your veterinary practitioner, as management factors in each herd are unique. The main factor to think about is the chance that the BVD virus will be introduced to your herd. Moved-in animals are the single biggest risk. Other risk factors should be checked, including direct contact with other livestock (for example, at boundaries) and indirect contact (such as via virus-contaminated equipment or clothing). If you are considering stopping BVD vaccination, consult with your vet first, to talk through and assess any risks to the herd that may still be present.

Timing of vaccination

BVD vaccines protect the developing foetus from infection with the BVD virus across the placenta. Check the individual vaccine data sheets: in general, the vaccination course (either 2 shots 4 weeks apart or a single shot) should be completed three to four weeks before the breeding season. Booster vaccinations should be given, again according to the specific instructions.

Pre-vaccination checklist
Read the data sheet
What is the earliest age at which the vaccine can be given?
Check which vaccines can be given at the same time (note that separate primary vaccinations against various cattle diseases may need to be given at different times).
What is the critical window for vaccinating for the animal/ the batch of animals that I want to vaccinate (ie taking into account the relevant number of weeks to allow immunity to develop before they are bred)?
How can I keep the vaccine in the required temperature range while it is transported and before it is used?

Pay attention to the critical window and discuss with your vet how to optimise vaccine use and value in a herd with an extended breeding season.