

BVD Persistently Infected (PI) animals being monitored

Following the initial phase of the compulsory BVD eradication programme, DAERA is now actively monitoring compliance with the programme.

Given the risks presented by Persistently Infected (PI) cattle, monitoring is likely to focus on the retention, location and illegal movement of PI animals and the dams of PIs (DAMPis). Untested animals, whose BVD status is unknown, are also likely to be scrutinised.

Herd owner engagement with the programme has been excellent with over 17,600 herds having joined. There have been more than 2,800 positive test results delivered, indicating a level of infection in line with what has been expected based on the results seen in the Republic of Ireland programme. To date, over 395,000 direct negative test results have been recorded on the Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) database.

PI animals shed high levels of virus throughout their lifetime and are the major source of infection for other animals, both in their birth herd and in neighbouring herds. Typically, they do not survive to reach slaughter weight. However, any female PIs that do reach breeding age will inevitably produce PI calves. For these reasons, it is recommended that PI calves are culled as soon as they are identified.

Under the BVD legislation introduced by DAERA, all calves born after 1st March 2016 must be tissue tag sampled and the sample submitted to a designated laboratory. No animal born on or after this date is allowed to move off the holding on which they were born unless a negative BVD test result has been obtained, except for disposal as an animal by-product, movement to a slaughter house or under a licence issued by the Department.

It will be for DAERA to decide how to deal with breaches of the legislation and what follow-up actions are taken. Compliance with the rules and guidelines of the programme are key to the successful and speedy eradication of BVD.

Notes for editors:

1. The BVD Eradication Scheme Order (NI) 2016 came into operation on 1st March 2016.
2. Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) is an initiative by farmers' organisations and the wider cattle industry to promote improved cattle health and welfare within NI, and BVD is the first disease to be addressed.
3. Further details are available from the AHWNI website, www.animalhealthni.com