

BVD Herd Restrictions Frequently Asked Questions

In what circumstances are herd restrictions being applied?

BVD Herd Restrictions are being applied either:

- when BVD Positive or Inconclusive animals remain on the farm
- when a significant number of cattle in the herd have not been tested for BVD.

Restrictions will prohibit all moves in or out of a herd and any associated herds.

When are restrictions being applied?

BVD Positives and Inconclusives

During the first year after the new BVD legislation is introduced, the grace periods before herd restrictions are applied when BVD Positive or Inconclusive animals are present are as follows:

Date	Herd Restriction GRACE PERIOD details for BVD Positive and BVD Inconclusive animals
1st February 2025	If a BVD Positive (BVDP) or Inconclusive (BVDI) animal is still in the herd 28 days after a BVDP or BVDI test result is disclosed, the herd and any associated herds will be restricted.
1st May 2025	If a BVDP or BVDI animal is still in the herd 7 days after their test result is disclosed, the herd and any associated herds will be restricted.
1st February 2026	Immediate restriction of the herd and any associated herds will occur when a BVDP or BVDI test result is disclosed.

BVD Unknowns (BVDUs)

During the first 16 months after the new BVD legislation is introduced, there will be grace periods and thresholds before herd restrictions are applied to herds with animals of unknown status (BVDUs) – see the table below for details.

Date	No. of BVDUs in herd that will lead to herd restriction
1st June 2025	20 or more
1st December 2025	10 or more
1st June 2026	5 or more

DAERA will assess the number of BVDUs over 30 days old in every herd on a regular basis. Any herd that has more BVDUs than the threshold will be written to by DAERA. These herds will be re-assessed 28 days later and any herds which remain above the threshold number of BVDUs over 30 days old will be restricted.

From the introduction of the second phase of BVD legislation, **cattle born before 1st March 2016** will also have a BVD Unknown status and will require to be tested. In other words, the presence of these 'older' cattle will contribute to the BVDU count on which the application of restrictions will be based. Only those animals that do not have a negative BVD status (ie that are not BVDN or INDNEG) will require to be tested. Most older cows have had several negative calves and therefore have INDNEG statuses.

What do the herd restrictions mean?

All movements of cattle into and out of a restricted herd are prohibited, except for movements:

- to slaughter (of BVD tested animals)
- for disposal of the animal as an animal by-product
- exceptionally to or from your herd under a licence issued by the Department. (To request a licence for these exceptional moves, contact your local DAERA Veterinary Office.)

How long will herd restrictions remain in place?

Restrictions will be lifted when 2 conditions are met:

1. 21 days have passed since the last BVDP or BVDI animal has been removed from the herd and associated herds (that is, the BVDP or BVDI animal has either been culled or re-tested with a BVD Negative result)
2. All animals in the herd and associated herds, except untested animals less than 31 days old, have a negative BVD status (BVDN or INDNEG status).

How can I get a herd restriction lifted?

- Ensure that the death of a BVDP or BVDI animal is notified to DAERA.
- Check that all animals in your herd and any associated herds have a negative BVD status (using NIFAIS). BVDU status cattle should be tested, through the use of a supplementary tag or following blood sampling by your private vet (for example, at a TB test).

Will I have to test the whole herd if BVD is present?

You may decide to retest those animals with BVD Positive or Inconclusive results (although from 1st May 2025 there will not be time for retesting before herd restrictions are applied). Retests should be carried out on a blood sample taken by your vet at the three week point after initial tagging of the calf. Those animals of unknown BVD status must be tested.

It may be advisable to test the dam of Positive or Inconclusive calves, or your private vet may recommend other additional tests at times, however there is no legal requirement to carry out a full herd test.

Why will no time be given for retests from May 2025?

BVD Herd Restrictions have been introduced following a public consultation by DAERA, in which respondents generally agreed with DAERA's proposals on the timing and application of restrictions. Industry's aim has been to see BVD eradicated from NI; to achieve that, unaffected herds must be protected and the risk presented by BVD Persistently Infected animals must be removed. Herd owners in receipt of a BVD Positive or Inconclusive result from May 2025 will have to make a choice whether to retest the affected animals and have their herd restricted, or to put get the animal culled.

Why will there be immediate herd restrictions from Feb 2026?

Herd restrictions will be applied immediately from February 2026 when a positive or inconclusive result is disclosed so that the BVD virus cannot be moved out of the breakdown herd to new herds through the movement of livestock. By 2026, the number of positive animals should have fallen significantly, so few herds should be restricted, provided that herd owners take action now to protect their herds.

I've had BVD in my herd recently – how can I prevent it from coming back?

To protect your herd from further BVD infection, it is critical that you take steps to contain the virus in your herd and to reduce the risk of the virus being transmitted to other cattle.

- **Isolation** of BVD Positive and Inconclusive animals is vital. The isolation must be in a location that has a separate airspace to other cattle, and hygiene measures should be put in place to ensure that equipment used on those cattle is not being used anywhere else on the farm and that there is no possibility of material contaminated with the BVD virus being moved away from the isolation area on boots, clothing or equipment.
- Consider **prompt culling**.
- **Clean and disinfect** pens, yards and trailers where the BVD positive animals have been.
- Test dams of positive calves that have not had BVD negative calves recorded against them previously.
- All animals that do not have a known BVD status should be tested as soon as possible. Newborn calves should be tested as soon as they are dry, and the samples submitted to a laboratory promptly for testing.
- Talk to your private vet about steps that you can take to protect your herd, such as introducing a **vaccination programme**.
- Animals that are initially positive and have a negative retest result should be regarded as having had a transient infection. Be aware that the virus may be circulating on your farm - discuss with your private vet or with AHWNI the possible source of infection.

Should I vaccinate my herd against BVD?

The main purpose of BVD vaccination is to induce a protective immunity in breeding animals to avoid a range of negative outcomes of infection on reproduction, including failure to conceive, abortion, birth defects and most importantly the creation of calves that are persistently infected with BVD virus. In the event of vaccinated cattle encountering the BVD virus, they are primed to mount an immune response to the virus and thus the risk of an

infection becoming established (and persistently infecting the foetus) is reduced. The decision whether to vaccinate or not depends on the risk profile of the herd.

There is a need for BVD vaccination on certain farms, to produce a protective immunity in breeding cattle. As the programme progresses, the prevalence of PI animals decreases, and this is followed by a decrease in the prevalence of animals with natural immunity following exposure. The reduction in immunity may leave herds more exposed to large outbreaks should a PI animal be introduced.

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.

BVD vaccines protect the developing fetus from infection with the BVD virus across the placenta. Check the individual vaccine data sheets: in general, the initial vaccination course should be completed three to four weeks before the breeding season. Booster vaccinations should be given, again according to the specific instructions. Pay attention to the initial critical window of susceptibility when the unborn calf is most at risk of infection (typically between 30 and 120 days of gestation) and discuss with your vet how to optimise vaccine use and value in a herd with an extended breeding season.

Why are associated herds being restricted?

When herds are under common management or in close proximity (that is, considered to be the same epidemiological unit), there is a higher risk of virus transmission from one herd to another associated herd. An associated herd that is restricted due to BVD will have to meet the same standards as the herd in which the Positive animal was present – that is, all cattle over 30 days of age must have a BVND or INDNEG status.

I have previously imported cattle to my herd – what actions do I need to take?

Cattle born in GB that are being imported to NI must be tested for virus antigen by an approved laboratory, either before arrival in NI or within 20 days of arrival. AHWNI can carry out checks on cattle imported from the ROI that have a BVND status, using ROI data from ICBF (where an approved laboratory has been used), to find out whether a negative BVD status can be uploaded to NIFAIS without the need for further testing.