

# Latest BVD statistics identify areas of higher risk – AHWNI



**Latest figures on Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) have identified the general location of infected cattle and particular areas of higher risk, according to Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI). While the overall level of BVD is reducing, outbreaks continue in every county. There are areas where the density of outbreaks means that herds in those areas are at a higher risk of acquiring the virus from a neighbouring herd.**

Recent statistics show that the Armagh and Omagh DVO areas have higher levels of BVD incidence compared to others. During May 2024, Armagh DVO had the highest level of initial positive or inconclusive results across NI, disclosed in 0.46% animals tested, with the next highest area being Omagh DVO at 0.37%, compared to the NI average of 0.21%. The retention rate of BVD Positives has fallen considerably; at the start of June 2024, 18 BVD Positive cattle in 16 herds had been retained for 28 days or more. Due to further disclosures of BVD Positive results in focal areas in Co Fermanagh since the start of June, herd owners in affected areas are being informed by text messages of the risk to their livestock.

Despite the pattern of decreasing disease levels across NI, some farmers have recently had BVD disclosed in their herds for the first time. The source of the virus can be: purchased animals that are transiently infected; purchased pregnant cows or heifers that are carrying an infected calf; neighbouring cattle (via direct contact) or contaminated material from BVD positive animals.

In the absence of BVD herd restrictions (which would help to contain the BVD virus), it is important that farmers buy in as few animals from as few herds as possible and try to establish the BVD status of herds from which they are purchasing stock. Good hygiene practices can help to limit the risk of infectious material being brought into contact with stock – herd owners can aim to minimise disease risks from high-risk visitors who have direct contact with livestock. These risks can be reduced for example by providing personal protective clothing and cleaning facilities for visitors and making it routine practice that all visitors disinfect all protective clothing on entry to the farm. Sharing animal equipment and common use of premises can also be a risk, so washing and disinfection of equipment and facilities can reduce this risk.

Farmers are encouraged to tag calves promptly after birth and submit samples quickly so that non-negative calves are identified as quickly as possible. A key aim of the BVD Programme is to drive down the length of time for which BVD Positive animals are kept on farm, as delays in removing Positives lead to not only a greater chance of the same farm having more Positives in the following season, but also a greater chance of neighbouring herds becoming infected. Veterinary advice is to dispose of Persistently Infected cattle as soon as possible, so that BVD can be eradicated from the NI cattle population.

The BVD Implementation Group continues to request the introduction of measures by DAERA that would allow herd restrictions to be used as a disease control measure, to reduce the risk of the virus being moved to other herds. The Group has also been requesting that specific information on BVD breakdowns be shared with at-risk herd keepers, to encourage the application of targeted biosecurity measures that will help to reduce the risk of the BVD virus entering their herds.

Note for editors:

1. For any queries, please contact AHWNI at [info@animalhealthni.com](mailto:info@animalhealthni.com) / 028 7963 9333.