

# Focus on hygiene to prevent transfer of BVD virus – AHWNI



As the incidence of BVD virus decreases, more attention is invariably focussed on dealing with new breakdowns and establishing their source. The most common source of infection in a previously uninfected herd has been introduced cattle, however Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) has noted a significant number of recent cases where no purchases were made during the Window of Susceptibility (that is, the time between the first and fourth month of pregnancy when a developing foetus can become persistently infected with the BVD virus) and where there was no apparent contact possible with neighbouring herds at grazing on the home farm or outfarms. In these cases, the spotlight then falls on visitors to the farm and on the risk of contaminated material entering the premises on clothing, machinery or equipment.

## Reducing Disease Risks from visitors

Every farmer should aim to minimise the risk of infectious diseases being brought on to their premises by outsiders. The visitors who are highest risk are those who have direct and frequent contact with other farm animals and your cattle. Some basic hygiene precautions are to:

- Keep farm visitors at a minimum
- Put signs in place to direct visitors to a contact point so that they don't need to explore the farm
- Discourage unnecessary direct contact between visitors and livestock
- Provide personal protective clothing for others, including dedicated clothing for farm workers, such as boots, overalls and gloves
- Keep handwashing and boot-washing facilities in working order and make cleaning and disinfection of boots and waterproofs a standard entry procedure
- Keep deadstock collection lorries out of or on the periphery of the yard and bring carcasses to them.

## Reducing Disease Risks from imported slurry

Slurry, solid manure and biological waste material brought on to farms from other farms or enterprises may be a possible source of disease. The disease risk will decrease with storage time (although Johne's Disease mycobacteria can be present for many months). Some other ways to reduce disease risks are to:

- Minimise the use of imported slurry
- Check the disease status of any farm from which slurry is being taken
- Avoid using hired equipment where possible
- Control the application of slurry carefully – spread when there is little wind and use direct injection or a trailing shoe if possible
- Spread imported material on silage or arable ground rather than grazing ground.

## Reducing Disease Risks from borrowed equipment

Loaned equipment (such as taggers, nose tongs, stomach tubes and calving equipment) or shared facilities (such as crushes, yards and housing) can be contaminated with excretions (faeces, urine, mucus or saliva) from BVD Positive animals. The risk of transfer of infectious material into a herd from these sources can be reduced by:

- Farmers having their own equipment and encouraging other farmers to do the same
- Careful washing and disinfection of borrowed material or facilities if borrowing is unavoidable.

As the cattle industry in NI works towards the eradication of BVD, it is vital that excellent hygiene procedures are followed by all agricultural and veterinary personnel when moving between farms, to reduce the risk of inadvertently transferring the BVD virus or other infectious agents between herds.