

Advice to check the BVD status of older cattle



Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) is advising herd owners to check the BVD status of older cattle, born before 1st March 2016 (the start of the BVD compulsory programme), to ensure that individual restrictions are not applied to these cattle on 1st March 2025.

A BVDU (BVD Unknown) status and individual restrictions will be applied to cattle born before 1st March 2016 that do not have a BVDN (BVD Negative) or INDINEG (Indirect Negative, due to the birth of a BVD Negative calf) status on that date. These restrictions are avoidable if the relevant animals are tested, either by using a supplementary tag or a blood sample taken by a private vet. If they are not dealt with, the presence of these older BVDU cattle will contribute to the BVDU count on which the application of BVDU herd restrictions will be based, from June 2025.

Why are BVD herd restrictions being introduced?

Prompt identification and removal of BVD Persistently Infected (PI) cattle are the keys to BVD control and it is vital that the virus is confined to affected herds. BVD PI cattle in a herd, although individually restricted, present a risk to the other cattle in that herd, and undetected Transiently Infected animals are a potential route of transmission for the BVD virus out of infected herds. Owners of cattle with a 'BVD Unknown' (BVDU) status are being encouraged to test them as soon as possible, to find out their BVD status, as there has been an ongoing concern around the risk of infectious cattle being present in the population of untested cattle. It is widely recognised that the introduction of BVD herd restrictions in NI should lead to a significant improvement in progress.

When will BVD Herd Restrictions be applied to herds with BVDPs/ BVDIs?

During the first year after the new BVD legislation is introduced, there will be grace periods before herd restrictions are applied – see the table below for details. Restrictions will prohibit all moves in or out of a herd and any associated herds.

Date	Herd Restriction GRACE PERIOD details
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.

How does a herd with BVDPs/ BVDIs get its BVD Herd Restrictions lifted?

If BVD movement restrictions are applied to a herd due to retention or presence of a BVD Positive or BVD Inconclusive, the restrictions can be lifted when 2 conditions are met:

1. 21 days have passed since the last BVD Positive or BVD Inconclusive animal has been removed from the herd and associated herds (that is, the BVD Positive or BVD Inconclusive animal has either been culled or re-tested with a BVD Negative result).

2. All animals in the herd and associated herds have a negative BVD status directly or indirectly (that is, BVD Negative (BVDN) or Indirect Negative (INDINEG) status) except for calves up to 30 days old which may still be untested (BVD Unknown (BVDU)).

It is important to ensure that the death of a BVD Positive or Inconclusive animal is notified to DAERA promptly and to check that all animals in the herd and any associated herds have a negative BVD status. Any cattle that have a BVDU status (including cattle born before 1st March 2016) should be tested, either through the use of a supplementary tag or following blood sampling by your private vet.

When will BVD Herd Restrictions be applied to herds with BVDUs?

During the first year after the new BVD legislation is introduced, movement restriction prohibiting all moves in or out of a herd and any associated herds will be applied as follows:

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

How does a herd with BVDUs get its BVD Herd Restrictions lifted?

Restrictions on herds with BVDUs will be lifted immediately on confirmation of a negative BVD result for all cattle more than 30 days old. Testing should be carried out using supplementary tags or blood samples taken by a private vet.

In summary, during the first year after introduction of BVD herd restrictions, the restrictions can be avoided if BVD Positive (BVD^P) or Inconclusive (BVD^I) animals are acted on very promptly and if all animals over 30 days of age in the herd have a BVD Negative status.