

BVD Programme Stakeholder

Engagement Plan 2025



The key focus of the BVD Programme by Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) in 2025 will be to encourage herd owners to take action to prevent the BVD virus circulating in their herds and to protect herds that are free from BVD currently. Actions that are taken now will help to reduce the incidence of BVD virus going forwards and therefore reduce the risk of herd restrictions being applied to herds in 2026.

BVD Programme gains were maintained during 2024, however incidence has not decreased at the rate that stakeholders would like. The BVD Implementation Group that oversees the NI Programme welcomes the introduction of BVD herd restrictions this year, as a measure that will accelerate progress towards eradication, by reducing the risk of the BVD virus being transmitted from infected herds.

1. Check BVD vaccination plans.

BVD vaccination should be considered in your herd if you purchase cattle, graze cattle where neighbouring cattle are in adjacent fields, or if your herd could be at risk of BVD introduction due to people coming on to your farm with contaminated clothing or equipment. Decreasing BVD virus prevalence leads to an accompanying decrease in natural immunity (due to reduced exposure), that may leave some herds at greater risk of a larger breakdown. Vaccination programmes should only be stopped following a discussion with your private vet about ongoing risks.

2. Take ear tissue tag samples from calves as soon as possible after birth.

It is important to obtain ear tissue tag samples, for BVD testing, as soon as a newborn calf is dry. The samples should be kept in a fridge for no more than 7 days before dispatch to an approved laboratory.

3. Deal with BVD Positive and Inconclusive cattle promptly.

Isolate BVD Positive and Inconclusive animals as quickly as possible. Decide whether to cull or retest any BVD Inconclusive cattle and consider immediate culling of BVD Positive cattle. If retesting, arrange for your vet to take blood samples three weeks after the initial sample was taken (ie three weeks from the date that the tag was inserted in the calf's ear or from when an initial blood sample was taken).

- From 1st February 2025, herd restrictions will be applied following a 28-day grace period after an animal has a BVD Positive (BVDP) or BVD Inconclusive (BVDI) virus test result.
- From 1st May 2025, herd restrictions will be applied following a 7-day grace period after an animal has a BVDP or BVDI virus test result.
- From 1st February 2026, herd restrictions will be applied immediately when an animal has a BVDP or BVDI virus test result.

Herd restrictions will prohibit cattle movements into or out of a herd and its associated herds. Restrictions will be lifted when 2 conditions are met:

- (i)** 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).
- (ii)** All animals in the herd and associated herds, except untested animals less than 31 days old, have a negative BVD status (BVDN or INDINEG status).

Clean and disinfect the isolation pen, as well as any yards, crushes or trailers where the BVDP animal has been, in order to reduce viral contamination (that could be passed to other animals) in the environment.

4. Review biosecurity:

- **Reduce the risk of selling BVD infected cattle.** Aim not to sell any female that may have been in calf at the time of the birth of a BVDP calf, until her calf has been born and tested with a Negative result for BVD.
- **Aim to purchase cattle from herds that have not had BVD infection in the last year.** Aim to reduce the risk of buying in Transiently Infected animals or a 'Trojan' female that could be carrying a BVD Persistently Infected calf. Purchasing cattle from BVD-free herds could help your herd to gain BVD-free status in the future.
- **Keep cattle away from neighbouring herds.** Avoid grazing cattle on land where cattle from other herds are in adjacent fields unless there is double fencing (with a gap of at least 3 metres) or stock-proof hedging.

5. Sample and test cattle that do not have a BVD status:

Sample and test cattle that have not had a Negative status calf registered against them (BVDUs), that have been imported without a valid BVD test; or that were born before the start of the compulsory scheme (1st March 2016).

- From 1st June 2025, herd restrictions will be applied to herds with >20 BVDU animals over 30 days of age.
- From 1st December 2025, herd restrictions will be applied to herds with >10 BVDU animals over 30 days of age.
- From 1st June 2026, herd restrictions will be applied to herds with >5 BVDU animals over 30 days of age.

Restrictions on herds with BVDUs will be applied following 28 days' notice and will be lifted immediately on confirmation of a negative BVD result for all cattle more than 30 days old. (Note that cattle with a 'BVD Unknown' (BVDU) status are restricted individually from moving to markets, other farms and abattoirs.)

6. Be aware of industry measures to control BVD.

- The voluntary abattoir ban on the slaughter of BVD Positive cattle remains in place.
- Retention of BVD Positive cattle is an ongoing non-conformance in the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme.
- AHWNI continues to be a source of advice on the control of the BVD virus for all stakeholders in the Programme.