

Patterns of local BVD persistence



Recent BVD test results indicate that there are significant ongoing patterns of BVD infection in the Armagh and Newry DVO areas, with infection in all herd types in these two areas making up one third of the total number of herds in NI affected by BVD in the last year. Geographical hotspots have been a persistent feature of the BVD problem here and farmers are advised to take steps to protect their herds.

Approximately 500 herds across NI have had at least one BVD positive result in the last year, with the highest percentage of affected herds being in Armagh DVO and the lowest percentage in Newtownards DVO. A similar pattern is seen when the disease is considered at the animal level, with the BVD incidence in cattle in the Armagh DVO area being over twice the rolling NI average.

The impact of BVD herd restrictions has been marked, with only 9 BVD Positive cattle being retained in 6 herds for more than 28 days at the start of September 2025; this compares with 29 cattle being retained in 25 herds in September 2024. While infection pressures are decreasing, it is still vitally important that farmers do all they can to prevent livestock contacts at boundaries with neighbouring cattle, by having either electric or double fencing in place, or by managing grazing ground alternately in conjunction with neighbouring farmers. It is also critical that BVD vaccination programmes are continued in herds that are exposed to risks, bearing in mind that, as disease prevalence decreases, there will be a decrease in the prevalence of animals with natural immunity following exposure.

Farmers who have BVD Positive cattle in their herd are reminded that if the Positives are still present after the seven day grace period, then their herd and any associated herd will be restricted by DAERA, for a minimum of three weeks after the death of the Positive, and when all cattle over 30 days of age in the herd have a BVD Negative status. Therefore it is important to check that any 'empty' sample vials returns have been followed up by getting the animal tested, either using a supplementary tag or a blood sample taken by a private vet. Owners of any cattle that do not have a BVD status (BVDU) are encouraged to test these cattle as soon as possible, to establish whether they are infected with the virus.

Cases of BVD continue to emerge in herds that have not had BVD positive results previously. At times the occurrence of these new outbreaks may be linked to the introduction of new stock to the herd. Sellers should be asked whether BVD has been present in their herd during the previous year, so as to reduce transmission risks when cattle are purchased. Any purchased cattle should be quarantined from the rest of the herd for at least 4 weeks, to allow any that may have become transiently infected with the virus to clear the infection. The BVD Implementation Group continues to request that DAERA makes BVD herd status information available, and that neighbour notifications are introduced, to heighten risk awareness in affected localities.

Note for editors:

1. AHWNI is responsible for the delivery of the Northern Ireland Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme. For more information on the operation of the Scheme, please contact AHWNI (email info@animalhealthni.com, tel. 028 7963 9333) or visit the AHWNI website www.animalhealthni.com.