

# Farmers urged to check BVD statuses to avoid herd closures



Animal Health & Welfare NI (AHWNI) is encouraging cattle farmers to check that all calves are tested promptly for BVD, to avoid herd closures by DAERA as new restrictions come in place on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025. From that date and following 28 days' notice by DAERA, movement restrictions to stop all moves in or out of a herd and any associated herds will be applied if there are 10 or more BVDUs more than 30 days of age present in the herd.

Cattle born before 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016 (before the start of the compulsory programme) that also have a BVD Unknown status are required to be tested. The presence of these 'older' cattle will contribute to the BVDU count on which the application of restrictions will be based.

## What has been the impact of BVD Herd Restrictions so far?

Since June 2025, herd restrictions have been applied when more than 20 BVDUs aged over 30 days of age have been present. The introduction of this measure has contributed significantly to a decrease from 15,000 BVDU (BVD Unknown) status animals a year ago, to just over 11,000 last week. BVD Positive results have been disclosed in the test results for some of these animals, demonstrating the importance of keeping on top of a herd's testing. Delays in disclosure of results because of failure to test calves shortly after birth can have a devastating impact in a herd, if the virus spreads to naïve, early in calf females, as Persistently Infected calves will result and the outbreak will be prolonged.

## Which movements do BVD Herd Restrictions affect?

All movements into or out of restricted herds will be prohibited by DAERA except for movements:

- to slaughter of BVD tested animals
- for disposal as an animal by-product
- under Departmental licence, for example, for welfare reasons or to allow a breeding bull into a herd when considered justified.

BVD Herd Restrictions will not have an impact on movements of cattle to or from the EU. Cattle with a 'BVD Unknown' (BVDU) status are restricted individually from moving to markets, other farms and abattoirs.

## How does a herd 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 a supplementary tag or a blood sample taken by a private vet.

As the ROI BVD Programme is similar to the NI Programme, AHWNI can carry out checks on cattle imported from the ROI that have a BVD Unknown status, using BVD status data from ICBF (where an approved laboratory has been used), to find out whether a negative BVD status can be uploaded to NIFAIS for these animals without the need for further testing. Farmers can contact AHWNI on 028 7963 9333 or at [info@animalhealthni.com](mailto:info@animalhealthni.com) to make enquiries about this service.

Any animals that are identified as positive following testing would need to be removed from the herd, as restrictions are also being applied to herds with BVD Positive cattle.

The BVD Implementation Group and wider cattle industry have recognised the need for actions to be taken to encourage the prompt BVD testing of all calves in NI, in order to identify BVD at the earliest opportunity. Industry continues to work towards the eradication of the BVD virus, which has a major economic impact in cattle herds, so that the benefits of lower production costs and a decreased need for antibiotics can be realised.