

BVD Programme Priorities for 2026



The herd incidence of BVD in NI has reduced by three quarters since the compulsory programme began, but increased slightly during the last few months of 2025. However the ambition of Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) is to see BVD eradicated, so during 2026 several new approaches will start, complementing existing veterinary advice. These approaches aim to encourage farmers to protect herds that are clear and to stamp out any circulating virus in infected herds.

Key priorities

CLEAR HERDS

Keep it out!

Check BVD vaccination plans

Consider vaccinating your herd for BVD if you purchase cattle, graze cattle where neighbouring cattle are in adjacent fields, or have people coming on to your farm who could potentially have contaminated clothing or equipment. Check that your vaccination protocol is correct, and don't stop vaccinating unless you've had a discussion with your private vet about ongoing risks.

Review biosecurity

Aim to purchase cattle from herds that have not had BVD infection in the last year. Ask the seller about their herd's BVD history.

Sample and test cattle that do not have a BVD status

Sample and test cattle of any age that have not been tested, have not had a Negative status calf registered against them, or have been imported without a valid BVD test. Cattle movements out of or into herds with 10 or more BVD Untested (BVDU) animals over 30 days of age are restricted (since 1st Dec 2025). Restrictions on herds with BVDU's will be lifted immediately on confirmation of a negative BVD result for all cattle over 30 days old.

Fence it out!

Keep cattle away from other herds

Avoid grazing cattle or youngstock 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.

INFECTED HERDS

Stamp it out!

Deal with BVD Positive and Inconclusive cattle promptly.

Isolate BVD Positive (BVDP) and Inconclusive (BVDI) animals as quickly as possible. Consider immediate culling of BVDP cattle. If retesting, arrange for your vet to take blood samples three weeks after the initial sample was taken.

Be aware of herd restrictions

From 1st February 2026, DAERA will restrict any herd and associated herds when a BVDP or BVDI test result is disclosed. Herd restrictions will be lifted when (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) and (ii) all animals in the herd and associated herds, except untested animals less than 31 days old, have a negative BVD status (BVND or INDINEG status), although restrictions will remain individually on breeding females until it is established that they are not carrying a persistently infected calf.

Clean and disinfect

Clean and disinfect isolation pens and equipment, as well as any yards, crushes or trailers where the BVDP or BVDI animal has been, to reduce levels of the virus in the environment.

Farmer compliance with the BVD Programme has been excellent overall. Please continue to:

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.

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.

Industry, through the BVD Implementation Group, continues to call for other legislative measures that would accelerate progress towards the eradication of BVD.

If you have queries on BVD, please contact AHWNI on 028 7963 9333 or at info@animalhealthni.com.