

Farm news

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Beef and BVD: Do you know what you're losing?

In the Annual National BVD Survey, 57% of farmers were in the beef sector, and results show that we are doing well but there is still plenty more to do to achieve eradication.

Beef enterprises are dependent upon efficient live weight gain (LWG) for profit, whether you are running a suckler herd, calf rearing or finisher unit. Any impacts upon LWG are detrimental to the business, and BVD is commonly a hidden factor. While signs of other illnesses, such as scour or pneumonia, are obvious, the impacts of BVD are often more subtle, so its presence on farm may go undetected for a long time. But if BVD is present, not only does it cause reduced productivity in several ways, it also makes other illnesses more severe due to its depressive effect on the immune system.

In beef herds, the primary impacts are on fertility – failure to get in calf, early embryo loss and abortions – and youngstock health and growth. This means:

1. Fewer calves on the ground per calving season
2. Weak, premature or deformed calves
3. More cases of common illness such as scour and pneumonia
4. Poor response to treatment of such infections
5. Higher mortality
6. Poor growth and increased cost and time to sale or finishing weight

BVD can cause:

Low conception rates

Return to heat

Embryo death

Abortion

Mummified foetuses

Deformities

Weak/premature calves

Live persistently infected (PI) calves

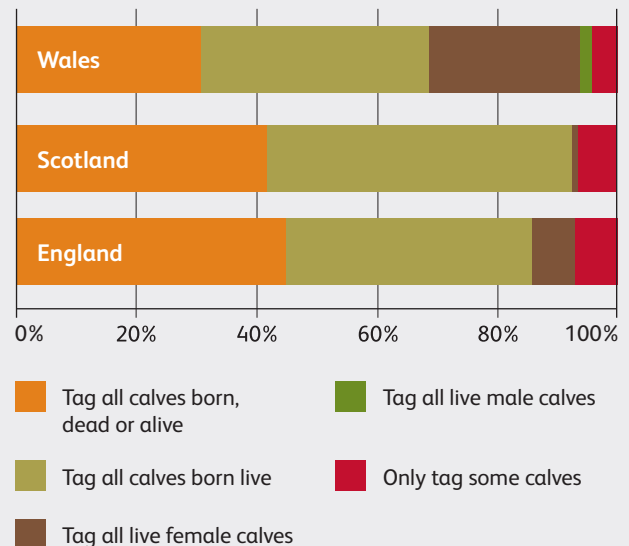
bvdfree.org.uk

Cost Effective Testing

It costs around £1 per calf extra for Tag&Test tags, which are the simplest, most cost-effective way of ensuring BVD is not in your herd. **It is important to tag ALL calves – both genders, and any stillborn or aborted if possible – because dead calves may be the first indicator of disease.**

England is ahead of the rest of the UK in this area, but in Northern Ireland it is compulsory, and has been shown to be a highly effective strategy in eradicating BVD from the national herd. Tagging calves also effectively tests their dam, because a Persistently Infected (PI) cow cannot produce an uninfected calf. If a calf tag test positive, it is therefore wise to test the cow too, and any of her previous offspring still in the herd. We can also offer annual or 6-monthly youngstock screening, as appropriate, via blood sampling. This can be easily combined with your TB test.

Have you used ear tag testing, and if so which animals are tested?



If disease is identified, further blood testing may be required to check the status of all your herd. Any animals that are identified as Persistently Infected (PI) need to be culled from the herd immediately, as they are not treatable and will continue to shed vast quantities of the virus into the environment, infecting other animals and perpetuating disease and losses.

For more information call our practice on **01332 294929** or email farmandequine@scarsdalevets.com

Benefits of Eradication

In Scotland and Northern Ireland, where eradication has become compulsory, most farmers have seen significant benefits in the key areas of improved fertility (16-18%), decreased calf disease (20%), decreased use of antibiotics (15%) and improved LWG (10%)

Knowing that your herd is BVD free and safe from infection also helps to reduce stress, the workload of treating and dealing with sick animals, and worrying about fertility and future performance, the impact of which is more difficult to measure.

Prevention and Biosecurity

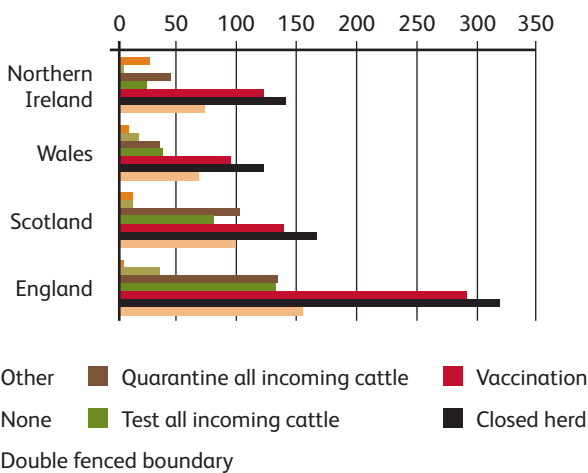
A worrying number of farmers have no BVD biosecurity measures in place, meaning they are highly vulnerable to the devastating effects of BVD should infection occur. Many farmers would consider themselves to be a "closed herd", but forgetting that rearing youngstock off site, the purchase of a new bull, or a replacement for a stillborn calf, could potentially bring in disease.

For many, vaccination is an effective insurance policy against disease, as part of a biosecurity strategy and in case any of the other measures change or fail. The more barriers we put in place to prevent disease, the better.

- Among farmers that had identified a PI animal, 44% decided not to cull them immediately.
- 77% of those animals then either died before reaching a productive size, or had to be treated for other conditions.
- When asked whether they would knowingly retain a PI animal again, 93% said they wouldn't.

Where infection is identified, we highly recommend vaccination to prevent further spread and to minimise the impact of disease. Increasingly farmers are opting to use Bovela® BVD vaccine, due its proven 12 months' duration of protection and easy one dose starter and annual vaccination schedule, and is now the UK's market leading BVD vaccine.

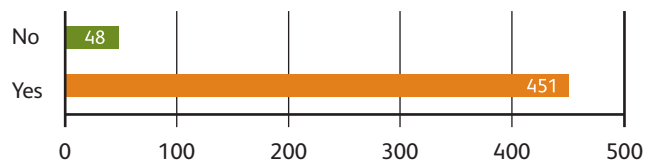
What BVD biosecurity measures do you have in place already?



BVD and the Beef Industry

An area of focus for national BVD eradication is preventing the sale of infected cattle between herds. The vast majority of survey respondents wanted the BVD status of the herd and/or the animals for sale to be on display at sale marts, so having your status known and your tests already done before sale may start to attract a higher sale price, as this may become compulsory. The BVDFree England scheme is built around a national database, bvdfree.org.uk, which is searchable for the BVD status of individual animals and herds tested under the scheme. Farmers must register with BVDFree to enable their herds' BVD test results to be uploaded to the database. Individual animal BVD status can be found by entering a UK tag number, or you can search the database for a herd's BVD status using the CPH number. This provides farmers with recognition, confidence and traceability when buying and selling BVDFree cattle.

Would you like auction markets to routinely display the BVD status of all animals and/or herds?



Welcome to Gualter!



We are excited and delighted to introduce Gualter Graça as our new Co-Clinical Director and farm vet. Gualter started with us last month and will be working alongside Carolyn to head up the farm team, along with Fay and Emily as our senior vets. He brings a desire to get on board with Scarsdale's vision and help drive Scarsdale Farm forward, as well as positivity, a friendly face and excellent clinical skills!

Gualter graduated from University of Porto Vet School in Portugal in 2011 and started his career working as a mixed animal vet in the Republic of Ireland. He then moved to the Midlands where he spent six years in clinical farm practice focusing on production animal medicine. He then spent a number of years working in the pharmaceutical industry and developing farm data analysis software. His choice to return to clinical practice reflects the importance he places on working directly with farmers and making a difference on the ground.

He has a special interest in analysing farm data in ways that improve cattle health and production, including areas like fertility, mastitis, calf rearing and nutrition. He is also passionate about all that farm clinical work can offer a vet on a day-to-day basis.

You will be seeing him and his canine companion Barkie, visiting your farm – **please look out for him and say hello!**

Outside work he is normally seen spending time with his family and doing sports. Rowing is his favourite sport - having done it for over 20 years, he is an active rower and coach.

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