

BVDFree England Press Release

10th May 2017



BVDFree reaches 1,000-herd landmark

The BVDFree England scheme reached a significant milestone this week, with 1,000 herds now registered to take part in the nationwide eradication scheme. In total 25,000 individual animal BVD statuses are searchable on the BVDFree database.

This has been achieved with support from 100 vet practices who are actively supporting the scheme and working with farmers to help improve performance. In herds with a chronic infection, BVD costs approximately £37 per cow every year*, whereas a proactive approach to eliminate BVD, such as tag testing calves, costs around £3.30 per calf**. Therefore it is much more cost effective for farmers to use their vet's expertise to improve animal health across the herd.

The BVDFree scheme provides a framework for farmers to work towards a BVDFree herd status, which includes assessing the risks of bringing BVD onto the farm and testing to find out if the disease is circulating in the herd. Once a herd is signed up to the scheme and begins testing, it must continue to test annually, either by completing a youngstock check test for each management group or by tag testing all calves born.

"Knowing a herd's BVD status and understanding farm-specific risk factors is now an essential part of herd health planning," said Emyr Rowlands of Willow Farm Vets, Cheshire.

"As a predominantly dairy practice, our aim is to know the BVD status of 90 per cent of our dairy farms by the end of 2017 by engaging clients through general meetings and small group discussions. Farms which have removed BVD persistently infected (PI) animals notice a rapid improvement in calf health and fertility, and, for those confirmed free of BVD, it has highlighted the importance of biosecurity and an effective vaccination protocol.

"Registering with BVDFree England provides a framework for those selling stock and gives buyers confidence in the BVD status of the purchased animals. No farm can afford not to be free from BVD."

To kick start the process of eliminating BVD on farm, visit bvdfree.org.uk and join the scheme. As more farmers engage with BVDFree, the goal of passing on a cattle population free from BVD for the next generation of cattle farmers becomes more achievable.

* Gunn et al., 2004

**Based on the difference between a BVD tag and test package and a standard pair of cattle tags.

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Notes to editors:

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a highly contagious viral disease of cattle. It is one of the biggest disease issues facing the UK cattle industry and has been estimated to cost between £13 and £31 per cow. The national cost could be as high as £61M per year. (Bennett and Ijpelaar, 2005)

BVDFree England is an industry-led scheme designed to eliminate BVD virus from all cattle herds in the country by 2022. It will develop a national database, storing individual and herd test results for scheme members. BVDFree is based on achieving the elimination of BVD through identification and removal of animals persistently infected (PIs) with BVD.

The BVDFree Scheme will be run on a voluntary basis until most of the cattle industry is covered by the Scheme, when a solid case can be presented to the Government for collaboration on the introduction of compulsory measures.

<https://bvdfree.org.uk/>