

Date : 11 June 2010  
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**Deadline for Comments : Monday 5 July 2010**  
**Views are being sought from : Any member with cattle**

## **BOVINE VIRAL DIARRHOEA (BVD): AN ERADICATION SCHEME FOR SCOTLAND**

Individual cattle keepers or regional groups are able to make progress in eradicating BVD on a voluntary basis but are at constant risk of re-introduction of disease due to unknowingly moving PI animals, infection from neighbouring farms or contact with infected animals at markets and shows. Together with the industry, including NFU Scotland, the Scottish Government has developed a proposed strategy to eliminate BVD. **Your views on this strategy are sought.**

NFU Scotland has been heavily involved in developing this eradication strategy and has had significant input into the Government's proposal. The Scottish Government as well as NFU Scotland realises that without farmer agreement and support the initiative will not succeed. **We need our members to tell us whether or not they support the proposed strategy to eliminate BVD.**

### **The Disease**

BVD causes a complex of diseases in cattle, the most important interfere with reproduction, affect the unborn calf and lead to mucosal disease. BVD can cause enteritis during acute or transient infection, significant suppression of disease resistance and may contribute to the pneumonia complex in calves. Infection immediately before or during the breeding season will reduce conception rates and cause early death of the embryo. Infection at any stage of pregnancy can result in abortion and can also cause deformities in the calf. Of particular importance is infection in the first third of pregnancy when developing calves that survive may remain Persistently Infected with the virus ("PI" calves) and it is these calves, once born, that provide the major route of spread for this virus. They often appear normal but shed large quantities of virus throughout their lives thus spreading infection. Most PI cattle eventually die of mucosal disease or secondary infections. Cattle which are not PI and which are not immune due to vaccination or exposure to disease may be transiently infected through direct or indirect contact with a PI or another infected animal. They may recover but their immune system may be depressed so they are more susceptible to other infectious diseases. Pregnant heifers or cows may abort or give birth to a PI animal, continuing the cycle of infection within the herd.

### **The Extent of the Disease**

Scottish Government commissioned research shows that 42% of dairy farms in the study showed high antibody titre from a bulk milk sample, indicating recent BVD exposure or vaccination. Although more than half of Scottish suckler herds has no recent history of exposure to the BVD virus, the data suggests that PI animals might be found on up to 17 % of study farms. This research attracted wide interest and support from beef farmers and their veterinary advisers. The research recommended that Scotland should consider eradication as a viable goal.

### **Benefits of Eradication**

Scottish Government estimate eradication would be worth £50 million to £80 million in increased output and reduced business costs over the next 10 years. Animals with BVD, both PIs and transiently

infected, require more feeding, their milk yields are lower and their veterinary costs are higher. The cost of BVD and the benefits of eradication will depend greatly on the levels of infection on farms. The benefits of eradication for farms currently with BVD are increased productivity and animal welfare, while farms already free of BVD will benefit from greatly reduced risk of their cattle becoming infected

## **Eradication Costs**

Costs to individual businesses will depend on the particular eradication or screening programme most suitable to the farm. Lab fees for a BVD antibody test is about £2.95 and for antigen are about £4, which would be in addition to the vet's time. An annual anti-body screen for 10 animals might cost £60 - £100 dependent on vet's fees. A full herd screen for antigen would obviously be much dearer but that would only occur in problem herds.

Indicative figures would suggest the following costs and benefits for different farm types:

- Scottish Government figures estimate the average dairy farm can expect a maximum annual cost of around £3,600 in year 1 (declining thereafter). After eradication the business can expect benefits equal to around £15,800 per year, as long as it remains BVD-free.
- The average LFA beef farm can expect a maximum annual cost of around £2,200 in year 1 (declining thereafter). After eradication the business can expect benefits equal to around £2,400 per year, as long as it remains BVD-free.
- The average LFA cattle & sheep farm can expect a maximum annual cost of around £1,630 in year 1 (declining thereafter). After eradication the business can expect benefits equal to around £1,750 per year, as long as it remains BVD-free.
- The average lowground cattle & sheep farm can expect a maximum annual cost of around £1,770 in year 1 (declining thereafter). After eradication the business can expect benefits equal to around £2,375 per year, as long as it remains BVD-free.

## **NFU Scotland Position**

The present NFU Scotland position is:

- We believe that BVD is of serious financial and welfare significance and as such needs to be tackled. We believe that eradication is realistic, and potentially cost effective, but only if the scheme is national, with an element of compulsion.
- We are of the opinion that an initial voluntary phase with incentives is reasonable and that a second compulsory phase may be required to significantly reduce the risk of re-infecting BVD free herds and to ultimately rid Scotland of BVD.
- Due to the infectious nature of BVD NFU Scotland believes it is reasonable to impose a legislative requirement forcing livestock keepers, at the later compulsory stage, to screen annually and take the necessary actions including precautions to avoid infecting neighbouring farms.
- We believe that PI cattle should not be sold other than direct to slaughter and that the BVD status of all cattle sold in Scotland should be declared. We also see it as reasonable for BVD results to be reportable.
- We acknowledge that cross border trade should not be negatively affected and see potential in quarantine strategies. We also believe the scheme will increase the incentive for an increased availability of BVD free cattle.

**COMMENTS NEEDED BY: 5 JULY 2010**

# BVD ERADICATION – FAX BACK FORM – 0131 472 4010

**Question 1: Do you believe that BVD should be controlled and eradicated?**

Yes      or      No

## **Eradication Plan**

The proposed national eradication plan is in two phases. Phase 1 is voluntary. It is designed to encourage farmers to remove PI cattle with the objective of reducing BVD prevalence and increasing the availability of BVD free cattle. It is intended to make eventual eradication easier. Phase 2 would be compulsory. It aims to eradicate BVD from every herd in Scotland and to keep it out.

**Question 2: Do you accept the eradication plan should have two phases?**

Yes      or      No

## **Voluntary Phase**

During the initial voluntary phase the intention is to provide financial incentive for the prompt culling and disposal of PIs. This would not be available in the compulsory phase. Animals testing positive would not be allowed to move off the holding other than direct to an abattoir and the producer would be responsible for arranging culling and disposal.

NFU Scotland believes that it is reasonable to offer an incentive to farmers who take steps voluntarily to identify and cull PI's promptly and that during the later compulsory phase this should be withdrawn.

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed NFUS position that there should be financial incentives for those taking voluntary actions?**

Yes      or      No

**Question 4: Do you accept that moving off farm except to a slaughterhouse BVD-PI animals should be illegal?**

Yes      or      No

## **Compulsory Phase**

From the start of the compulsory phase cattle keepers would be required to screen their herds annually. The testing would depend on the type of holding, for example, dairy farms could initially do a bulk milk test while beef breeders may blood test a sample of unvaccinated cattle. The costs of sampling and testing would be borne by the farmer.

**Question 5: Do you accept the eradication plan will have to have a compulsory phase?**

Yes      or      No

**Question 6: Do you have any other comments (these can be provided on a separate sheet) :**

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Return to George Jamieson on Fax 0131 472 4010 or [george.jamieson@nfus.org.uk](mailto:george.jamieson@nfus.org.uk)