

New BVD testing schem

SCOTLAND HAS already made steps towards eliminating Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) from its cattle industry, and a new calf testing and monitoring scheme could be the next step towards eradicating the disease throughout Britain.

The disease which is believed to cost the UK cattle industry £50-£75m a year or £50-£100 per cow, causes poor fertility and abortions, and at best calves that often scour or go down with pneumonia. The problem lies in the fact that an infected cow always gives birth to an infected calf, therefore without testing it is difficult to eradicate.

However, a new testing scheme, launched at Beef Expo by XL Vets veterinary practices, last week, aims to make steps towards that.

Check Tag BVD, promotes the testing of calves and provides verification of a negative test result for the disease through a central and fully accessible on line database.

Significantly, the scheme will include the use of



JENNY HULL

branded white tags as part of the testing procedure in order to provide an easily identifiable and highly visible prompt for calf buyers to check test results before purchase.

The main aim of Check Tag BVD, is to improve the identification of source farms and reduce the risks of persistently infected (PI) calves from unit to unit, thereby stemming the spread of the disease.

"BVD is a straightforward disease to treat, but it is one that everyone has to work together if the industry is to eradicate it as it is a contact disease

much like sheep scab," said Jenny Hull of XL Vets Northumbria.

"Scotland, Ireland and Wales already have some sort of scheme so it's now up to us to get something going."

She said that BVD is primarily spread by PIs – calves born from cows infected with BVD – and that while these PI calves often appear normal, they spread the infection to other cattle they come into contact with.

"By identifying PIs, ideally shortly after birth and before they have been moved from their home unit, we can minimise the spread of BVD and also offer more targeted control of programmes in herds that are identified as infected."

Cost is estimated to be approximately £5-£6 per tag, which includes laboratory testing.

Once calves have been tagged and tissue samples analysed, results can be recorded via the farm's veterinary practice onto a central Check Tag BVD database.