



A campaign to promote the control and prevention of BVD in cattle

Significant losses cannot be ignored

With milk prices taking a hit for many and Russian trade embargoes starting to take effect, pressure to maximise efficiency looks set to remain critical for UK agriculture.

For the past few months, BVD Zero has taken a look at many aspects of the disease, which is regarded as the most common viral disease affecting cattle in Europe. BVD has a wide range of hard-to-spot symptoms meaning it can go hidden and unseen in a herd for many months or even years.

It is capable of impacting on many areas of cattle performance and some affected farms will be seeing losses of up to £112/cow, warns vet Jon Reader from Synergy Farm Health, part of the XL Vet Group.

"Differentiating between factors outside your control [global feed prices, cost of fuel or trade sanctions for example] and those you can im-



Jon Reader says some farms will see losses of up to £112/cow.

prove, such as animal health, has been shown to consistently give farms the best chance of maximising performance," Mr Reader adds.

Optimising cattle performance is essential to maintain margins to allow capital to be invested back into the business, he stresses, and that

means striving for the best health status possible for your herd.

With BVD, affected animals show very different symptoms and in many cases there may be a delay between the virus exposure and the appearance of clinical signs. This means it could be lurking in a herd, yet

impossible to see without specific testing. The virus is particularly dangerous when infecting pregnant dams. If a pregnant dam is exposed to the virus in the first third of pregnancy and the calf is born alive, it is highly likely to be a Persistently Infected (PI) calf.

Persistently infected

PIs shed virus into the herd throughout their lives and although often unthrifty, can live to successfully produce calves of their own, which will always be a PI themselves.

"Various studies have attempted to work out the losses associated with BVD. One of the most detailed puts these at between £17.50-£112 per cow – or £1,750-£11,200 for a 100 cow herd – depending on how it manifests in a herd. Other published work has put the cost at anything from £9,000 for 100 cows to an alarming £27,300 if another disease is involved.

"BVD can act as a door-opener to other diseases as it negatively affects the immune system – called immunosup-

Factors affecting financial effects of BVD

When looking at the financial effects of BVD, a number of factors need to be examined:

1. Production losses
2. Deaths
3. Effect on fertility
4. Increased replacement rate
5. Reduced market value of stock
6. Veterinary and treatment costs

7. Effects on concurrent disease processes
8. Increased labour costs and management time

Financial refs: 1. A. Lindberg, J. Brownlie, G.J. Gunn, H. Houe, V. Moennig, H.W. Saatkamp and P.S. Valle, *The control of bovine viral diarrhoea virus in Europe: today and in the future. Rev. sci. tech. Off. int. Epiz., 2006, 25 (3) 961-979*

pression," he explains. "This means it paves the way for diseases such as pneumonia or scours to take hold and it has also been linked to mastitis being more severe as well as other diseases being more likely, such as IBR and even TB.

"And vaccination is not always the straightforward answer as BVD control requires a whole herd, multi-faceted approach," he adds. "Even in herds that have been vaccinated, it is important to note that BVD virus can still be circulating and having a negative impact."

When asked, many producers

in Scotland, which has been running a BVD eradication programme since 2010, comment on the overall improved general state of stock health.

"The level of losses a herd with BVD suffers will vary according to which areas of herd performance are most affected. However, given that throughout Europe surveillance shows between 60-90 per cent of herds have been exposed to the virus, it is fair to surmise the majority of herds are suffering financial losses directly due to BVD," Mr Reader concludes.