



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

Prospects for English BVD control programme

The vast array and differences between BVD eradication programmes both within the UK and beyond into Europe was captured in a talk at the recent BCVA (British Cattle Veterinary Association) Congress in Leicestershire.

Defra's Christine Middlemiss outlined the range of approaches, leaving delegates from England and Wales perhaps wondering at what point there would be some clarity and consistency.

Scotland

Acknowledging Scotland was due to enter stage four of its programme which launched in 2010, Ms Middlemiss commented on the fragmented nature of control programmes in England and Wales, remarking without a more joined up approach, a Government-led eradication programme was not on the cards.

"Defra's guidelines give four reasons for intervention into a health or welfare area and, at the moment examining BVD according to those guidelines and our own key performance indicators does not make it a priority," she said.

Defra's four reasons for intervention are:

- Public health.
- Social and economic reasons.
- Animal welfare.
- Trade impact.

"That aside," she said, "BVD doubtless leads to significant economic losses – £58/affected cow according to ADAS 2013. This, coupled with the insidious nature of the disease and the time lag between exposure to the virus and animal effect ought to promote BVD as a disease Defra should be more involved with.

"If the industry can work together more cohesively giving Defra clear and non-conflicting messages about disease con-



trol with one national group responsible for a programme instead of the fragmented situation we find ourselves in currently, we will listen," she said.

"Industry must support this with a framework of key messages, a structure for delivery of such a programme, efficient and effective data collection and clear measurements show-

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JONATHAN STATHAM

ing the benefits of additional funding, then many of Defra's criteria will be answered."

Database

With a well-established control programme in Scotland, producers are all aware of their herd's BVD status and this is captured on a database. Although Wales and Northern Ireland are making headway on BVD eradication, no such databases exist and testing/surveillance is largely voluntary.

"Understanding the BVD status of your herd is a critical starting point for all farmers and will involve vet support to advise

on the best testing method to use," Ms Middlemiss said. "It was therefore disappointing to read feedback from some of the recent BVD FREE meetings from farmers who said they knew the BVD status of their herd as they vaccinate. This is absolutely not the case and clearly demonstrates the need for an educational partnership between farmers and vets backed up by adequate funding and a database of all herds."

Concluding her talk, Ms Middlemiss said: "If industry can get most farmers to undertake BVD control, we (government of the day notwithstanding) will consider making supportive legal provisions in terms of a national control programme."

At the end of the session, past BCVA president and vet from XL Vet practice Bishopton Vet Group, Ripon Jonathan Statham, who has been heavily involved in the BVD FREE campaign, pushed Ms Middlemiss on when funding for an English

programme may be made available and what format that would take.

Responding, Ms Middlemiss said: "There is the prospect of an a BVD plan for England in 2015 provided the relevant RDPE criteria are met."

Hard work

Mr Statham said: "There has been a huge amount of hard work done by farmers and cattle vets over the last two years with the BVD FREE campaign. The current interim RDPE funding is supporting positive co-ordination of this campaign, with the work of the North West and South West initiatives which were also RDPE supported.

"It feels as if there is a genuine window of opportunity to bring all stakeholders together to work in partnership with Government to begin to deliver a joined up BVD plan for England at last."