

Schmallenberg reappears in SW suckler herds

Schmallenberg has been identified in spring calving suckler herds in the South West, according to reports.

Vet Keith Cutler from Endell Vet Group, says in the past two weeks he has seen eight deformed calves from the Schmallenberg virus. He says other vets in the region have also reported suspect cases.

Mr Cutler believes animals calving down now would have been infected at the back end of last year when they were midway through

pregnancy.

Schmallenberg has not been widely reported in lambs this year and Mr Cutler hopes the infection period would have happened before ewes went to the tup.

“Spring lambers are only just starting down in the South West and if the challenge happened in October, it may have been before the ewes got pregnant.”

Mr Cutler says uptake of the Schmallenberg vaccine last year

wasn't great, partly on the back of another midge-borne disease, blue-tongue, which went away in the second year following vaccination.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency warns that Schmallenberg remains a real threat and farmers should stay alert.

A spokesman for the agency said: “Farmers should remain vigilant and look out for signs of fever and milk drop in dairy cows and for deformed lambs and calves. There is

limited evidence of suspected acute SBV infection on a small number of dairy farms.

“Vets can advise how best to manage the risk on farms, including making business decisions about testing to confirm the presence of disease, and vaccination.”

* If your farm has been affected by Schmallenberg this year, we want to hear from you. Email us at fwlivestock@rbi.co.uk