

As part of *Farmers Weekly's* Breakthrough BVD campaign, we asked UK beef and dairy producers how big a threat the virus was and how they are managing it. **Rhian Price** details the results

Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD) is perceived as such a high threat in UK herds that almost all dairy and beef farmers questioned in a recent *Farmers Weekly* survey said they would join a voluntary eradication programme.

More than 200 beef and dairy farmers in the UK answered the survey, which was carried out in association with the animal health company Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica.

In total, 45% of respondents admitted BVD had been or was a problem within their herd, and nearly all of those questioned (98%) said they would be interested in joining a voluntary eradication programme, given the opportunity.

Currently, there are national programmes in Ireland and Scotland to tackle the disease, but there is no government-led legislation in Wales and England.

According to the survey, 86% of farmers said they believed buying in cattle posed the most significant threat to introducing the disease into their herds.

Vet Jon Reader, from Synergy Farm Health, Dorset, says large herds across the Continent can pose even greater risk to buying in disease than home markets.

"A PI [persistently infected] animal crosses a European border every two hours. Herds that are trying to expand in this country are sourcing heifers from France, Holland and Germany and they need to be aware of the risk they pose."

Mr Reader says another big risk of importing cattle from Europe is type 2 BVD.

There is currently no requirement for animals to be screened for BVD type 1 or 2 before they



Survey reveals farmers ready to take on BVD

enter England and Wales.

"In Scotland you cannot send an animal to market that is a PI and ignorance is not an excuse."

In the survey, 70% of farmers admitted they had never heard of BVD type 2.

Mr Reader says this is not surprising, as type 2 is not yet widespread in the UK. But he warns this does not mean UK farmers should become complacent.

"It is widely present on the Continent and it is only a matter of time before it is more common here. If you are going to buy animals from Europe, all animals should be tested for BVD to make sure you are not introducing a PI or a transiently infected animal into your herd."

Type 1 and 2 infected animals can be identified through a routine blood test, says Mr Reader.

"You can pool the blood samples into groups of 10. If you are buying a large group of animals it is a much cheaper way of doing it."

CONTROL

In the survey, the top factor perceived in eradicating BVD was vaccination. Mr Reader says while vaccination is a key part of any control, it is often an area where many farmers fall short.

"The big problem is that often the vaccine isn't being given cor-

*** A PI animal crosses a European border every two hours**
Jon Reader

rectly in many cases, because things like the interval [between doses of the primary course and between boosters] isn't properly observed."

The majority of farmers (92%) said their vet was their main source of contact for information about BVD, yet few ask their vet regularly for advice on BVD. But problems with vaccination can be overcome if people consult their vet more often, says Mr Reader.

He says advice should be sought at two key stages:

- * When there is a change in heifer management
 - * Before vaccination to ensure the correct vaccine is being administered at the right time.
- "It needs to be discussed on a regular basis to make sure there is not a window of opportunity when animals are not protected."

Buying in cattle from Europe poses the greatest threat to introducing BVD type 2 to the UK.

63%

say running a closed herd is a main factor in getting rid of BVD

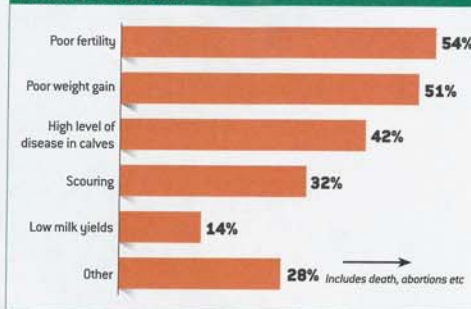
98%

say they are interested in joining a voluntary eradication programme

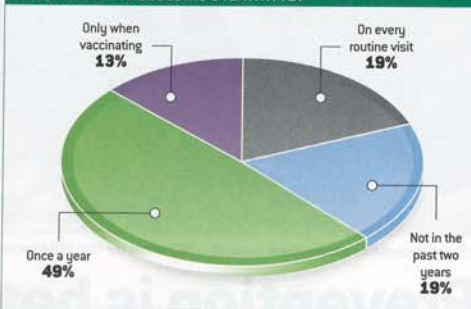
75%

of respondents who have introduced a BVD control programme report livestock are healthier as a result

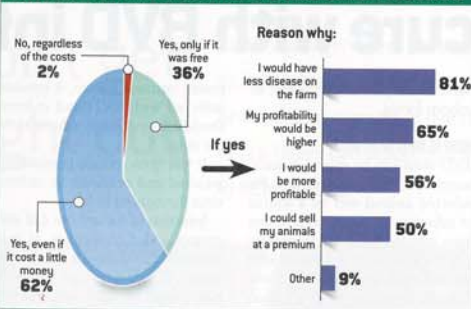
IMPACT OF BVD ON HERD



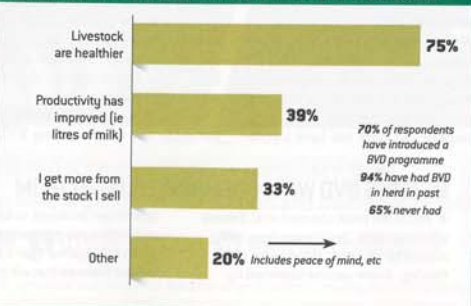
FREQUENCY OF DISCUSSING BVD WITH VET



INTEREST IN JOINING A VOLUNTARY BVD ERADICATION PROGRAMME



AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENTS FOLLOWING A BVD PROGRAMME



SPONSOR'S MESSAGE

Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica

BVD is the most common viral disease affecting cattle. Despite vaccines being around for 50 years, the disease is still thriving. A new vaccine has been launched by Boehringer which promises to be easier to use and, with a one-shot primary course and protection against type 1 and 2, has many unique features that will prove helpful.

These symptoms are all associated with BVD infection. If they are familiar on your farm, talk to your vet about screening for BVD infection:

- * Animals that are not thriving for no apparent reason
- * An increased number of cases of pneumonia in calves
- * A higher number of embryonic losses
- * Cows more susceptible to other infectious diseases, such as IBR
- * High empty rates
- * A high number of cows returning to service

COMING UP IN FARMERS WEEKLY...

3 APRIL

- * We find out how a Scottish beef herd is tackling BVD.

10 APRIL

- * An Irish dairy farm talks about the improvements it has seen after eradicating BVD.

ONLINE

Get free, expert advice on BVD control online at academy.fwi.co.uk and earn DairyPro CPD points when you complete the academy

