

Improve immunity to aid pneumonia control

Pneumonia is costing the cattle industry £60m/year and affects 20% of all beef cattle, visitors to a pneumonia prevention workshop were told.

Making a detailed appraisal of the way cattle are managed on-farm and at every stage would highlight areas that could be responsible for persistent pneumonia outbreaks, explained Phil Alcock of Yorkshire-based Bishopton Vets.

“It is likely that something in your system is letting you down.

“It could be coccidiosis, which is often diagnosed in calves suffering from pneumonia or pos-

sibly uncontrolled BVD [bovine viral diarrhoea] in the herd causing immune suppression.

“Even stress suffered by young calves when they’re moved on to rearing units can trigger pneumonia, so we’re encouraging farmers to look at every potential cause.”

Rather than fixating on the pneumonia bugs and the usual ventilation advice, Mr Alcock said he wanted to encourage farmers to improve immunity and tackle any weaknesses they can identify on their own units.

Mr Alcock said every farm should have a blueprint of its man-

agement system.

“If there’s something written down it can be easily scrutinised and potential pneumonia risks eliminated.

“It’s a very worthwhile exercise and forms the basis of a further discussion with the farm vet to help identify the weaker areas of their system.”

Farmers were told that persistent pneumonia outbreaks each year could be caused by a nutritional issue or parasite problem.

“In many cases the pneumonia outbreak is secondary to some other problem,” he said.