

Check online database of BVD-free cattle to avoid buying in PI animals

With the advent of the Tag and Test ear tags and thanks to an online database of BVD-free cattle called CheckTag, farmers can avoid buying in animals that are persistently infected (PI) with the BVD virus, says vet Keith Cutler from Endell Veterinary Group.

Two years ago, XLVets set up an online database for cattle which had tested negative for BVD using the tissue-sampling ear tags. Called BVD CheckTag, this was part of an initiative to help support the industry in testing for and eradicating the disease. Already there are over 58,000 BVD-negative cattle on the database, which can be found at www.bvdcheck.co.uk. As more farmers are switching to

using the special ear tags, the dataset continues to grow.

Mr Cutler explains: "The Tag and Test tags allow farmers to identify and cull any PI animals that are born on their farm.

"The big benefit of the online database is for buyers. It enables them to check the BVD status of animals before purchase. Farmers should of course already be quarantining newly purchased animals on arrival at the farm. However, by checking the database first, farmers can not only avoid the expense of buying in a PI animal, but also avoid exposing other quarantined cattle to the virus."

PI animals will ultimately die prematurely from the



disease, however meantime they will shed the BVD virus and affect the health of their herd mates. In-calf cows and heifers exposed to the BVD virus may suffer abortions or give birth to a PI calf. Exposure to the virus also has a detrimental impact on an animal's immune defence system.

"In fact, American studies have shown that the presence of a PI animal in a pen of otherwise healthy animals depressed

feed conversion efficiencies, and more calves died from pneumonia, compared to pens with no PI animal present," says Mr Cutler.

"Prospective buyers of cattle should always check the status of cattle which have been tagged using the Tag and Test ear tags by going to www.bvdcheck.co.uk."

More information on the BVD virus can also be found at XLVets' website - www.bvdfree.co.uk.