BVD What Next?

Over the last year or so there have been several campaigns within the cattle industry to increase awareness about BVD. The impact of a BVD persistently infected (PI) calf can be huge as it fails to thrive and constantly challenges its peers resulting in reduced performance across the group. All herds whether beef or dairy, large or small, inevitably fall into one of the following categories with regards to BVD:

- Unknown status because they have not tested
- BVD free and monitoring with repeated testing
- Evidence of BVD, not taking action to control
- Evidence of BVD and vaccinating and in some cases testing to identify and remove PIs.

We are fortunate with BVD that there is a good level of understanding of how the disease spreads and very good tests available to establish the status of the herd and of the individuals in the herd.

BVD control in England is falling behind the initiatives promoted in the other regions of the UK and much of mainland Europe where the focus has moved to achieving BVD free status. Rather than just living with the consequences of BVD in the herd or controlling the impact of BVD by vaccinating alone the regions are now trying to identify PIs and remove them from the herd.

Testing options for BVD:
- Bulk milk sample and test for BVD antibody to establish if the milking herd has been exposed to BVD or vaccinated
- Bulk milk sample and do a PCR test for BVD antigen to see if a BVD shedder (usually a PI) is in the milking herd.
- Individual animal blood or milk samples to test for BVD antibody or antigen. Antibody positive animals have been exposed to BVD or are vaccinated. Antigen positive animals have the BVD virus in their system and are likely to be PIs, retesting will confirm their status. PIs are antibody negative and antigen positive.
- Tissue sample (usually ear tissue) and test for BVD antigen.

There is no reason to get left behind by the other regions when it comes to BVD eradication. The technology used in tissue sampling and testing has progressed significantly over the last 5 years and is now used as part of many BVD eradication programs and is compulsory in some. The technique normally involves taking the sample of ear tissue when the new-born calf is tagged as per BCMS regulations. The sample is then sent complete with the sampled animal's official ID for lab analysis and the result reported directly to the submitting farm.

There are several advantages to this technique of BVD screening including:
- identification of BVD PIs before investing a lot of time and money in rearing,
- removal of PIs from cohorts of calves early which limits the impact of the PI in the herd
- cows which have PI calves can also then be tested to check their BVD status and PIs removed from the breeding herd
- calves which are declared to be not BVD PIs will attract a premium at auction as buyers will have greater confidence.

Many of the commercial tag manufacturers now offer a BVD tissue sampling tag. As part of XL vets we have access to a bespoke tissue testing tag scheme where the tissue tags are white in colour rather than the usual yellow tag. The tag will still carry all the required information for formal identification just on a white background which makes it obvious to all concerned that the animal is BVD free thus adding value to any stock going for sale and making management of home reared replacements easier. The tag and test program quickly fits into the normal routine on farm and doesn’t require any extra input.

Whatever your current status or control strategy for BVD it’s always worth reviewing it with your regular vet. Could you benefit from tissue testing your calves?
Summer parasite control

Spring has well and truly arrived, the fields and hedgerows are looking majestic as trees, grass and other crops burst into life. Many livestock have been released from their winter housing and are enjoying the change of habitat and the abundance of fresh grazing. With this idyllic rural scene it’s easy to forget the parasite issues that will develop as the season progresses. We have already received reports of fly problems in yearling heifers at grass for example.

As a general principle it is best to start your control plan before you are confronted with evidence of parasitic problems. So although you may not see many flies around yet if you treat now and repeat your treatment monthly through the summer you will achieve better results as you stop the multiplication of the fly population by killing them early in the year. If you reach for the fly pour in August when they are swarming all around the population is massive and very difficult to impact.

Similarly you can use strategic dosing at suitable intervals to limit the impact of gut and lung worm exposure while still allowing the animals enough challenge to generate and boost natural immunity.

Speak to one of the vets or call Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health for a review of your summer parasite control plan to make sure you are using the right products on the right animals at the right time for best results.

FOOT TRIMMING

Contact Steve Austin
01565 723036

Visit per cow
£12 – 4 feet  £10 – 2 feet
Block – £9.50
Bandage – £2.50
No Call out fee for 12 or more cows

FREEZE BRANDING

Contact Malcolm Pheasant
01565 723036

Prices for 3 digits
Up to 15 Cows – £80
15 – 50 Cows – £4.50 per cow
50+ cows £4 per cow
Every extra digit £1 per cow. Both sides +75%

Beeston Animal Health
www.willowsvetgroup.co.uk

Sheep client meeting
Willows Farm Practice & Beeston Animal Health
BLOWFLY AND SUMMER PARASITE CONTROL
Wednesday 21st May
7.15pm
The Swan Hotel
Tarporley, CW6 0AG
Refresments and supper provided

Willows Farm Animal Veterinary Practice
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