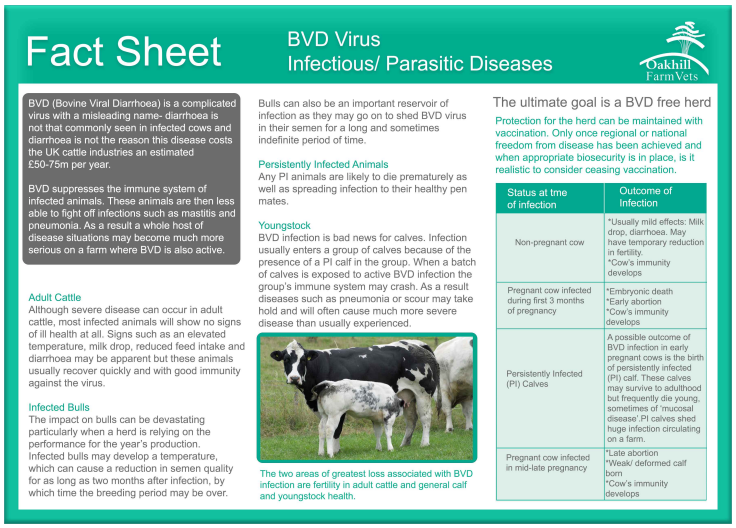
BVD Virus - Infectious/ Parasitic Diseases

BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) is a complicated virus that costs the UK cattle industries an estimated £50-75m per year. Check out our fact sheet below, or you can click here to download it.



Fact Sheet

BVD Virus
Infectious/ Parasitic Diseases

Oakhill FarmVets

BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) is a complicated virus with a misleading name- diarrhoea is not that commonly seen in infected cows and diarrhoea is not the reason this disease costs the UK cattle industries an estimated £50-75m per year.

BVD suppresses the immune system of infected animals. These animals are then less able to fight off infections such as mastitis and pneumonia. As a result a whole host of disease situations may become much more serious on a farm where BVD is also active.

Adult Cattle

Although severe disease can occur in adult cattle, most infected animals will show no signs of ill health at all. Signs such as an elevated temperature, milk drop, reduced feed intake and diarrhoea may be apparent but these animals usually recover quickly and with good immunity against the virus.

Infected Bulls

The impact on bulls can be devastating particularly when a herd is relying on the performance for the year's production. Infected bulls may develop a temperature, which can cause a reduction in semen quality for as long as two months after infection, by which time the breeding period may be over.

Bulls can also be an important reservoir of infection as they may go on to shed BVD virus in their semen for a long and sometimes indefinite period of time.

Persistently Infected Animals

Any PI animals are likely to die prematurely as well as spreading infection to their healthy pen mates.

Youngstock

BVD infection is bad news for calves. Infection usually enters a group of calves because of the presence of a PI calf in the group. When a batch of calves is exposed to active BVD infection the group's immune system may crash. As a result diseases such as pneumonia or scour may take hold and will often cause much more severe disease than usually experienced.

The two areas of greatest loss associated with BVD infection are fertility in adult cattle and general calf and youngstock health.

The ultimate goal is a BVD free herd

Protection for the herd can be maintained with vaccination. Only once regional or national freedom from disease has been achieved and when appropriate biosecurity is in place, is it realistic to consider ceasing vaccination.

Status at tme of infection	Outcome of Infection
Non-pregnant cow	*Usually mild effects: Milk drop, diarrhoea. May have temporary reduction in fertility. *Cow's immunity develops
Pregnant cow infected during first 3 months of pregnancy	*Embryonic death *Early abortion *Cow's immunity develops
Persistently Infected (PI) Calves	A possible outcome of BVD infection in early pregnant cows is the birth of persistently infected (PI) calf. These calves may survive to adulthood but frequently die young, sometimes of 'mucosal disease'.PI calves shed huge infection circulating on a farm.
Pregnant cow infected in mid-late pregnancy	*Late abortion *Weak/ deformed calf born *Cow's immunity develops

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How widespread is the problem and what is the cost?

If BVD virus is active on your farm then the costs are likely to be significant, possibly ranging from £50-£100 per breeding animal.The fertility costs- reduced conception rates, embryonic death, abortion and bull infertility - make up a large proportion of the total cosrs associated with BVD. The impact of the disease will depend on a variety of factors including level of immunity within the herd, caliving pattern, stress levels and levels of other diseases.

What can be done?

Aims:

1.) Prevent poor conception rates, embryonic loss and abortion.
2.) Prevent further PI calves from being born.
3.) Remove PI animals and persistently infected bulls.

To achieve 1 + 2 you must prevent pregnant cows from being infected with the BVD virus. This can be achieved by keeping the virus out of your farm or by using the cost-effective BVD vaccine.
Removing PI animals and infected bulls will reduce the amount of virus circulating on your farm.

Step One: Find out your BVD status

Speak to your vet about bulk and heifer milk samples (dairy) or heifer and calf blood sampling (beef and dairy). If you are completely free of BVD then this is great news.
However your cattle may have no immunity to the virus which means that if infection did enter the herd then the results could be catastrophic.

If you are 'BVD free' review your measures for keeping it out and consider vaccinating.

If you are one of the 90% of herds which have been exposed to BVD this does not necessarily mean that you have an active problem. Heifer milk samples and youngstock blood samples will determine whether BVD is a current or historical problem.

BVD Virus Test Negative

BVD Status Unknown
Animal has not been tested under BVDFree

BVD Virus Test Positive

Next Steps:

Once you know your status you can assess the risk to your herd with your vet.
Given that determining your BVD status can be achieved at little or no cost, this is a must for all cattle farmers.

Once you know the risk you can make an informed decision on what action to take. Steps taken will vary and may include:
* Review biosecurity
* Review purchased stock policy
* Vaccinate
* Remove all PI animals

If you would like help or information about finding our what your BVD status is, then give us a call on:
01772 861300
or email
farm@oakhill-vets.com
Then you can take control over your plan to protect your herd and your business.