

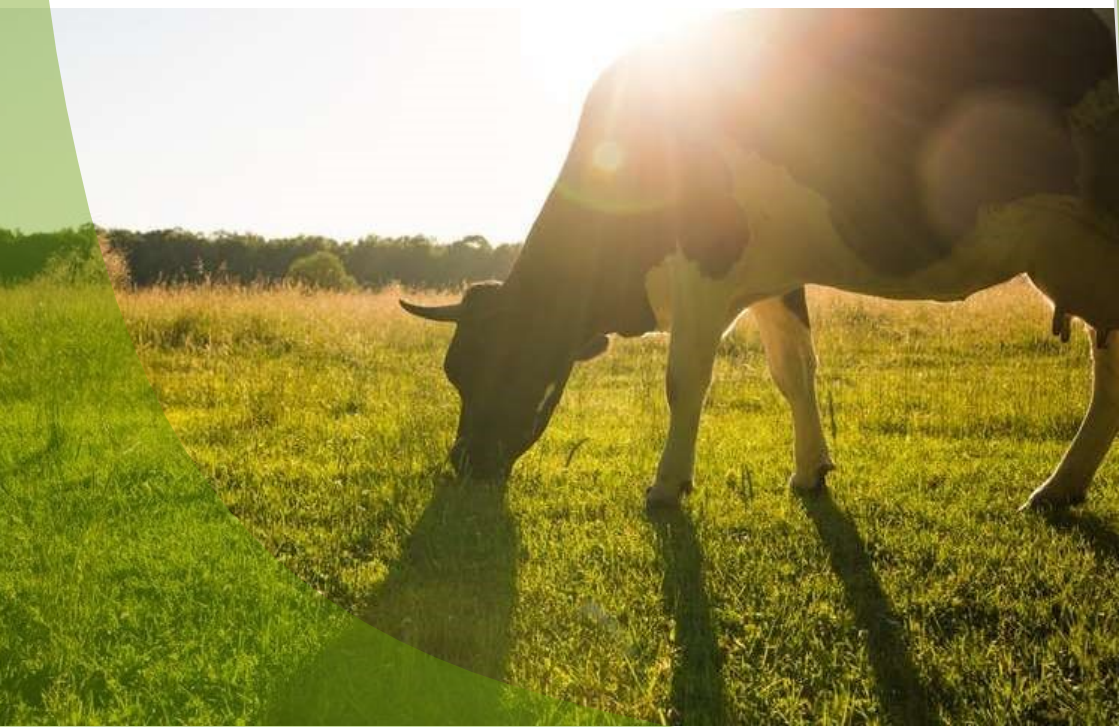


**nantwich** | farm vets

## Newsletter July 2020

This Month:

BVD Stamp it Out  
Not-On-Farm Training  
Team News



# BVD Stamp-it-Out

**Laura Donovan** won 3rd prize in the BVD Awards 2020 for her work and organisation of the scheme over the last couple of years. Here's the summary of the scheme and what it has achieved.



## Background

In 2018 a funding package was made available to help farmers in England tackle Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) virus. The 'Stamp It Out' project was designed to help farmers eradicate BVD on their farms and reduce the disease in the national herd. 'Stamp It Out' funding was granted for 150 Nantwich Farm Vets clients (this has since been extended to 200 clients), involving a four-stage process for every farm:

- An initial cluster meeting
- An on-farm visit to undertake testing for BVD
- A second on-farm visit to discuss the results and perform a Persistently Infected (PI) hunt if necessary
- A final follow-up cluster meeting

Involvement in the scheme required having breeding cattle on the holding, but herd size ranged from 5 to 2,050 breeding cattle (average herd size was 243 breeding cattle). Over 36,000 breeding cattle were involved.

## Herd BVD Status – Testing

The aim of the initial on-farm visit was to ascertain current Herd BVD Status. On the majority of farms a 'check' test was performed; a minimum of 5 blood samples for BVD antibody were taken from unvaccinated 9-18 month old heifers. A few farms did not have any check testing carried out. These were 'flying' herds with no available young stock, farms with evidence of a PI within the last 12 months or farms that had already used ear tags for so long that negative BVD status was already known.

Check test results: In total, 1,141 blood samples for BVD antibody were taken, 21% of which were positive, 79% negative. Fig. 1 shows the number of positive samples found on each farm:

- 66 farms had completely negative results.
- 15 farms had a single BVD antibody positive animal and 5 farms had 2 positive results. It is possible that, on vaccinated farms, these results could be due to waning maternal

## PI hunt methods

Direct contact with a PI animal is a frequent primary source of infection so in order to eradicate BVD, all PIs must be removed from the herd. After all initial testing was complete, PI hunt funding was granted for 32 farms. PI hunts were applied for based on: 3+ positive individuals within a check test, repeated positive Bulk Milk BVD PCRs or evidence of a PI animal on farm within the last 12 months (e.g. positive BVD antigen ELISA on suspect animals or ear tags).

The majority of PI hunts were carried out by farmers beginning to use BVD tag and test ear tags. Once a positive calf was identified it was isolated and retested 3-4 weeks later by blood sample for BVD antigen. The calf's dam was also blood tested for BVD antigen.

In total, through these PI hunts, 34 PI animals have been identified on 14 farms (Fig. 3). To date 29 of these animals have died or been euthanased,

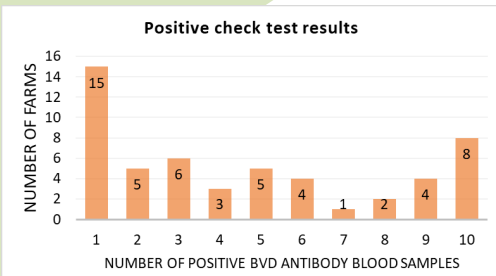


Fig.1 The number of positive BVD antibody blood samples found at the check test

BVD antibody. It could also indicate the start of a BVD outbreak. More testing was required on these farms to confirm BVD status.

- Farms with 3 or more positive BVD antibody samples on check testing were deemed infected and granted extra funding for a PI hunt.

A single Bulk Milk BVD PCR test was carried out for all dairy farms involved. In total 114 bulk milk samples were tested. 100 samples (88%) were negative and 14 samples (12%) were positive (Fig. 2). Only one farm with a positive bulk milk BVD PCR had a negative heifer check test.

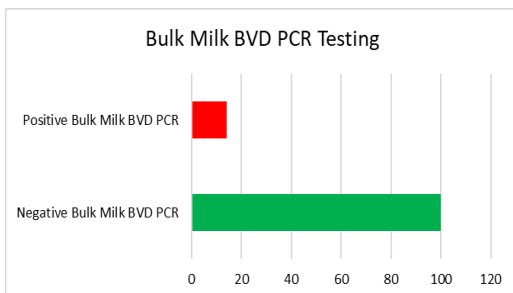


Fig. 2 The results of Bulk Milk BVD PCR testing



Fig. 3 A PI animal (right) identified on a PI hunt. Both animals were born on the same day.

5 remain on one farm but have been placed in isolation. As calves continue to be tested it is expected that the number of PIs identified will rise. Fig. 4 shows the number of PIs identified on each farm.

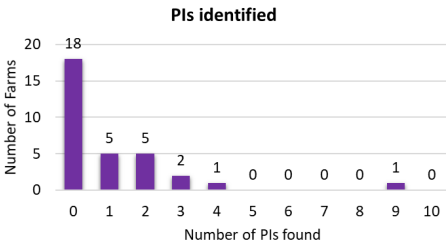


Fig. 4 The number of PI animals found on each farm

18 farms have not yet identified a PI. This may be due to the PI having already died or left the farm.

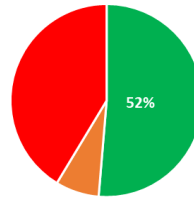
### The Impact of 'Stamp It Out'

**'Know your status':** 'Stamp It Out' provided an opportunity for farmers to find out their current BVD status in preparation for the expected introduction of legislation in 2021 for farmers in England to 'know their BVD status'. Many farmers were unaware that BVD was present on their farm until the check testing was performed.

**Increased vaccine use:** Increasing awareness of infected status and encouraging discussion about the disease has led to a slight increase in overall vaccine use and importantly converted farms from lapsed vaccine use to full vaccine use (Fig. 5)

Interestingly, the vaccination status of

Vaccination status Autumn 2018



Vaccination status Autumn 2019



Fig. 7 A comparison of the vaccination status of 150 farms participating in 'Stamp It Out' in Autumn 2018 vs Autumn 2019

the 32 farms granted PI hunts was slightly lower when compared to the 150 farms as a whole.

Of the farms that buy BVD vaccine there has been a slight shift towards the use of Bovela BVD vaccine. Though Bovela is more expensive than Bovilis it is easier to follow the vaccine protocol correctly as it is a single dose.

**BVDFree England:** This is a voluntary industry-led scheme, working to eliminate BVD from all cattle in England by 2022. The 'Stamp It Out' scheme has given a much-needed boost to BVDFree England.

In July 2018 Nantwich Farm Vets had 19 of the 150 farms signed up to BVDFree England and now there are 148 farms registered on the database.

To achieve BVDFree Test Negative herd status there are 2 options:

1. Tag and test (for BVD virus) all calves born for two years minimum or
2. Youngstock blood sample (for BVD antibody) at least 5 unvaccinated animals per management group (at 9-18 months of age) for two years minimum (BVDFree, 2020).

66 farms have now completed Year 1 accreditation and will hopefully become fully accredited over the next 12 months.

**Increased BVD monitoring:** There has been a 75% increase in the number of herds using BVD ear tags on all newborn calves (19% to 33% of farms). There has been a small increase in the number of farmers only BVD ear tagging replacement heifers (3% to 5% of farms). Farms that only BVD ear tag heifers still need to perform check testing to meet the requirements of BVDFree England.

Several farms that do not vaccinate for BVD have signed up to regular monitoring such as NML BVD Herdcheck which includes quarterly bulk milk BVD PCRs and annual heifer BVD antibody check testing.

**Future BVD planning:** 50 farms (33%) will BVD ear tag everything born, 79 farms (53%) will use heifer check testing, 17 farms (11%) have no plan and 4 farms (3%) will continue antigen blood testing. 9 of the farms with 'no plan' are flying herds. Flying herds are not yet engaging fully with testing for BVD. The only option for flying herds to reach BVDFree testing standards is to BVD ear tag every calf born. This additional cost on calves that are only on farm for the first few weeks of their life is a difficult sell, so legislation might be needed to encourage flying herds to engage with the BVDFree initiative.

The main improvement noticed on farms that have eradicated BVD is in calf health. One farmer commented that they no longer need to add antibiotics to milk powder to treat sick calves. PI animals spread BVD and cause immunosuppression in their neighbouring animals, which increases incidence of diseases such as pneumonia and scours.



## Conclusions

The BVD 'Stamp It Out' funding was originally based on 20% of farms in England being infected with BVD. This seems to be consistent with Nantwich Farm Vets clients as PI hunts were performed on 32 (21%) of 150 farms involved. In the short time since the initial testing the status of many farms has changed.

We aim to continue to help farms achieve and maintain negative BVD test status—and contribute to the goal of eradicating BVD in the UK.

If you want to discuss BVD further in your herd, don't hesitate to speak with your vet, or contact the 3rd place BVDFree prize winner in person!

# On-farm and Online Training



It is looking unlikely that we are going to be holding any meeting or training at the practice in the near future so we are exploring our options for continuing to provide these services in other ways. Many farms, particularly those on aligned contracts, must demonstrate they are providing training for their staff. Offering staff training is also a great way to get your team engaged with on-farm protocols and helping staff develop their knowledge and skill can be a factor in attracting and retaining good staff members.

We have been trialling some on farm, socially distant training sessions which have gone down well with the farms involved. These short 45 min sessions are aimed at all members of the farm team, giving a brief background to the subject and then best practice advice tailored to the farms needs.

In order to maintain social distancing, we ask that farms provide a suitable space for the meeting, this should be

spacious and well ventilated, an (clean) empty shed works well. All we need is a power source and a barrel or bin as a projector stand, we can bring the rest including projector, screen and folding chairs.

These short sessions, delivered by one of our vet team, cost £150 if covering a topic we have already developed, and bespoke training is available on request.

Topics available are:

- Risk awareness when handling cattle
- Safe administration of medicines
- Milking routine
- Mobility scoring
- Basic calf health
- Calving basics
- Colostrum feeding
- Calf feeding

To arrange a session or to discuss your on farm training needs speak to Nicky at the practice.



## Online Medicines course

We are aware that there are still some farms that need to complete our Red Tractor approved medicines course. This could be run as an on-farm session but as the full Red Tractor approved course takes several hours to complete it may be more cost effective to join our on line sessions.

You will require a device connected to the internet with a microphone and camera to join this session. As with the face to face version a certificate of attendance will be provided to all participants after the meeting. The cost of these 2½ hour sessions is £50 (discounted from face to face session as no food provided).

The first online session will take place on Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> July starting at 10.30am, and more sessions will be arranged subject to demand. To book your place please contact the office or email [nickybowden@nantwichfarmvets.co.uk](mailto:nickybowden@nantwichfarmvets.co.uk)



## Team news

This month we welcome Gwen Davies to our team of vets. Do give her a warm welcome when you see her on farm. We'll let her introduce herself:



*I'm Gwen, I'm from Swansea, and in true Welsh style I grew up on a sheep farm in the mountains, where my love of farming began. Despite the global pandemic, I qualified from Bristol vet school in the summer of 2020. I enjoy travelling and have been fortunate enough to undertake voluntary veterinary work in South Africa, Egypt and Tanzania. My main interests include dairy fertility, young stock and (of course) sheep!*

*In my spare time I can be found enjoying the outdoors with my friends, reading and attempting a new recipe."*



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