

## Dealing with abortions in cattle

An abortion is the birth of calves between 50 and 270 days of gestation. Most early abortions will go undetected with the first signs being a return to heat, as the foetus will be reabsorbed internally.

Most herds have an abortion rate of around 1 to 2%, so a single abortion is no cause for alarm. However, under UK law all abortions must be reported to the local animal health office, they will then decide whether an abortion investigation for brucellosis is required.

In dairy herds this will generally only be if the history indicates an increased risk of brucellosis, such as multiple abortions occurring within thirty days or abortions in imported cattle, but in other herds all reported abortions are usually investigated. If further investigation is needed, the vet visit and testing for brucellosis will be fully funded.

To report a bovine abortion on your farm, please contact one the numbers below

**England: 03000 200 301**

**Wales: 03003 038 268**



## Understanding BVD

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) is a viral disease caused by pestivirus and can have an impact on the herd's immune system and reproductive performance. BVD has been estimated to cost the industry around £40 million per year, which equates to £46.50 per cow, mainly attributed to fertility losses. However, these estimates are likely to undervalue the losses through immunosuppression and secondary infections.

How is BVD spread?

The main reservoir for infection are persistently infected (PI) animals, these will be shedding BVD virus for life and are fundamental to maintaining the disease. PI calves are born when a naïve cow is infected with BVD during the first 3-4 months of pregnancy. When born, they rarely show any sign of infection but will be excreting millions of virus particles daily in their saliva, skin, urine and faeces for the duration of their lives.

Calves in contact with the PI will become transiently infected, this has an immunosuppressive effect, increasing the risk of infections such as respiratory disease and diarrhoea. The clinical signs in cows include increased risk of lameness and mastitis and, depending on stage of pregnancy, the production of another PI calf. Therefore, a single PI in a calf pen can cause severe disease outbreaks in the rest of the group and contribute to further PI animals on the farm.

The greatest risk of introducing BVD into a herd is from bought in animals, either as PI animals or a cow in-calf where they might be carrying a PI calf. Other sources of infection include direct contact with neighbouring cattle and infected materials, such as equipment, boots or clothing.

### What are the new BVD testing requirements in Wales?

Keepers of cattle herds in Wales must have their herds screened every year for BVD. This involves taking blood samples from five unvaccinated calves aged 9 to 18 months, we might be required to repeat this if groups are managed separately. This test is designed to look for antibodies in the blood, a positive results means that the calf has previously been exposed to BVD virus. One or two positive results might be suggestive of exposure from neighbouring cattle or equipment and so we would suggest retesting the group along with another 5 animals after at least 4 weeks. Three or more positive results is suggestive of a possible PI involvement, and we would suggest doing a PI hunt.

Any herd not achieving a negative status would be placed under movement restrictions from July 2025. After a review, the Welsh government have postponed legislation until July 2026.

This brings us onto the other type of test, antigen testing. This test looks for the virus in the blood, which is present in PI cattle or in cattle transiently infected. As the name suggests, transiently infected calves are only positive for a short while. Re-testing any positive antigen test calves after 3 weeks would help differentiate between PIs and transiently infected calves.

To discuss the testing requirements in your herd or about BVD in general, contact the office on 01978 311444.

## Bluetongue update

From 1st July 2025 the Bluetongue Virus restricted zone is being extended to cover the whole of England. Bluetongue movement restrictions for susceptible animals within England will no longer apply. Farmers can move ruminants and camelids within England without movement tests from 1 July.

As of yet, we are uncertain of the Welsh Governments plans, an announcement is to be expected on the 12<sup>th</sup> June. Bluetongue vaccines are now available; we would encourage our clients to have a discussion with one of our vets to determine if vaccination is the best course of action for your farm.

## Small holder vaccine sharing day

Have you got a few animals you wish you could protect with vaccination but don't want to have to buy a big bottle and waste the majority of it? Join our small holders club to be part of our vaccine sharing days. The next vaccine sharing day will go ahead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July.

Contact us on 01978 311444 to find out how you could benefit from our vaccine sharing service.



The poster features a background image of sheep and a goat in a green field under a blue sky. At the top, the Daleside Veterinary Group logo is displayed. Below it, the text 'SMALLHOLDER CLUB' is written in a smaller font. The main title 'VACCINE DAY' is prominently displayed in large, white, bold letters. At the bottom, there are three columns of information, each with a star icon and a circular logo. The first column is titled 'COST SAVING' and includes a pound sterling symbol (£). The second column is titled 'CONVENIENT' and includes a circular logo with the words 'HASSLE FREE'. The third column is titled 'IMMUNITY' and includes a circular logo with a cow silhouette. Each column has a small text box below it explaining the benefit.

**Daleside**  
Veterinary Group

SMALLHOLDER CLUB

**VACCINE DAY**

★ £ ★  
COST SAVING  
Share the cost of the bottle with other members of the club

HASSLE FREE  
CONVENIENT  
Can either be collected from the practice or administered by our team

★ ★  
IMMUNITY  
Protecting your stock from the main clostridial diseases

