

# New Online database shows calf BVD status

The ability to easily check a calf's BVD status online has gained momentum with the announcement by XLVets of the launch of a central, fully accessible web-based database that provides verification of a negative test result for the disease.

The new database is central to the 'BVD CHECK TAG' initiative that uses branded white ear tags as part of a BVD status testing procedure. The white tags show that an animal has been tested for BVD and provide an easily identifiable and highly visible prompt for calf buyers to check test results online before purchase.

With essential critical mass provided through the backing of the 53-strong UK-wide group of XLVets veterinary practices, the main aims of BVD CHECK TAG are to improve the identification of source farms

and reduce the risks of persistently infected (PI) calves moving from unit to unit, thereby stemming the spread of the disease.

"BVD is primarily spread by PIs, which are calves born from cows that are infected with BVD," explains Dan Humphries from the XL Vets' practice Lambert, Leonard and May. "These PI calves often appear normal but will spread infection to other cattle that they come into contact with. It's therefore critical that we remove these animals from the breeding herd and also ensure that they are not sold into other herds.

"By identifying PIs, ideally shortly after birth and certainly before they move from their home unit, we can minimise the spread of BVD and also offer more targeted control programmes in herds that are identified as infected."

The scheme is entirely voluntary with farmers first having to make the decision to use the tissue sample testing technology to initiate the process. The white BVD CHECK TAG tags are available from a number of tag suppliers, with tissue analysis either done by the vet practice or through a central laboratory, depending on the type of tag used. Cost is estimated to be approximately £5-6/tag, which includes the laboratory testing.

Once calves are tagged and the tissue samples analysed, results are recorded via the farm's veterinary practice onto the new central BVD CHECK TAG database. This online database – which in future will be accessible from any smart phone through an APP – will then provide verification of all calves testing negative through the scheme.

"The scheme is being piloted on a significant scale through XLVets member practices, but any farmer (not only clients of XLVets practices) will be able to access the database from the outset," adds Dan. "The ultimate aim is that all practices will have the option of participating in the scheme, with the database being hosted independently, thereby allowing the branded white tag to become a universal symbol to promote BVD awareness and prompt positive action to remove PIs."

MSD Animal Health is sponsoring the BVD CHECK TAG scheme.

**For further information**

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