



BVDHerdCheck Beef User Guide

Manage disease • Protect your future



BVD HerdCheck Beef includes

- Tag & Test all calves born and animals entering the herd
- Youngstock screen consisting of at least 10 blood samples

BVD HerdCheck is a CheCS approved BVD surveillance scheme, which establishes the BVD status of a herd on an ongoing basis. There are three schemes; Dairy, Flying Herd and Beef.

Tag & Test

Ear tissue samples, will be tested for the presence of BVD virus using an antigen test (ELISA method) allowing the accurate identification of persistently infected (PI) animals. Every calf born on the premises, whether dead or alive, should be tested as soon as possible after birth along with all new animals introduced into the herd.

On insertion, the tag cuts a disc of tissue and seals it into a vial which disconnects. Both vial and tag display a unique identification number. Tissue samples can be taken using official identification tags or management (button or flag) tags and the sample vials will be tested at our laboratory in Hillington. Results will be received within five working days of sample receipt at the laboratory. Any age of animal can be tested using this method but it is recommended that animals are tagged as young as possible so that PI calves can be identified and removed quickly to reduce the spread of the virus. A PI animal can be identified within the first week of its life, if tagged at birth. This testing strategy also gives you information about the calf's dam, as a PI dam will always produce a PI calf.

Why tag EVERY calf?

It is important that ALL calves born on the premises are tagged (even those that will not be kept as replacements) to ensure that any PIs are identified quickly to limit damage from the virus. It is recommended that dead calves, stillborn and aborted foetuses are tested by tagging with a management tag. This is because they could have died as a result of BVD virus and can provide important information about the dam. Incoming stock or suspect animals should also be tested using the Tag & Test method. Vaccination has no effect on Tag & Test results as it has no effect on the presence of virus in PI animals and thus they will still test positive after vaccination.

Empty vials

All vials are visually checked by laboratory staff to ensure that sufficient tissue is present to test. If an empty or damaged vial is found, you will be contacted. If you are using Nordic Star Tags a replacement vial is sent out to retest the animal free of charge.

Recommended tag supplier

Nordic Star are the recommended Tag & Test supplier www.nordicstar.co.uk. Please note that animal eartags are not included in the price of BVD HerdCheck. Only tissue samples tested at NML are eligible for BVD HerdCheck.

Tag & Test positive result – what next?

An animal with a BVD positive antigen result is likely to be a PI and should be moved to isolation for three weeks prior to a follow-up test to confirm its disease status. The dam should also be tested. Consult your vet for advice on retesting positive animals and to look for further infected animals. Calves should be at least 30 days of age before a blood sample is taken for a confirmatory test however a further tissue sample may be used at any time from 21 days after the first sample was taken.



Part 2: Beef youngstock screen

This programme will also involve blood testing a sample of unvaccinated youngstock. To complete BVD HerdCheck surveillance, a minimum of 10 blood samples are required, from animals between the ages of 9-18 month. These blood samples must represent the management groups on your farm. These samples will be tested for the presence of antibodies (ELISA). Samples can be split into two batches of 5 over the year or all 10 blood samples sent together in one batch per year.

Your vet may recommend that additional blood samples are required to give more complete and accurate surveillance of your youngstock, depending on your management system and number of management groups. Additional samples can be submitted to the lab and the results will be reported alongside your other results.

Why use a youngstock screen?

Animals are tested from the age of 9 months because by this time any maternal BVD antibody from colostrum will have waned. The animals tested must not have been vaccinated against BVD. By testing for antibodies we are looking for exposure to the virus.

From 9 months of age any positive antibody results indicate that the animal has been exposed to BVD virus, become infected and then recovered. Testing a subsample of animals within a management group will indicate if the group has been exposed to BVD virus. If the sub sample all test negative for antibodies, the management group has not been exposed to the virus, and is naïve. These animals are at risk of infection.

If positive results are found on a screen, this indicates active infection in your youngstock. You should consult your vet about next steps to identify the source of this infection.

IT IS ADVISED THAT YOU CONSULT YOUR VET TO SELECT THE ANIMALS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE YOUNGSTOCK SCREEN AND TO INTERPRET THE RESULTS.

When do I submit my samples?

Ear tissue vials and blood samples may be submitted at any stage during the 12 month period, although it is recommended that blood samples are sent in for testing as soon after the commencement of the scheme to aid early detection of the disease. If insufficient blood samples have been submitted, reminders will be sent to farmers and their vets throughout the course of the year. A progress status will also be displayed on Herd Companion offering a simple way of checking what samples are outstanding to complete BVD HerdCheck.

What is a management group?

A management group consists of those animals that can freely achieve nose-to-nose contact. PI animals spread the virus very efficiently when in nose-to-nose contact with other cattle therefore it is not necessary to test every animal in a group.

Why is a youngstock screen necessary if I

have tested my calves through Tag & Test?

This combination of testing offers a belt and braces approach to BVD testing. Monitoring your youngstock for antibodies provides a back-up in case a PI slips through the net or if the group has met infection. This additional information would alert you to any problems much sooner than waiting for PI calves to be born.

Biosecurity tips

- 1 Find out the individual status of any purchased or introduced animals and the status of the herd of origin.
- 2 Cows that have become infected in pregnancy will be antibody positive but could still be carrying a PI calf.
- 3 Bulls can be a risk of infection even if they are antibody positive. Consult your vet when considering buying a bull.
- 4 BVD spreads easily, so protect your cattle from infection at farm boundaries.

To enrol please call 01902 749920