

PIs in Scottish Dairy Herds: The Silent Menace

In Scotland, Bovine Viral Diarrhoea is more common in dairy herds than beef, which is a problem for the dairy sector because BVD reduces fertility and therefore hits lifetime milk production. It also increases abortions, calf illness and mastitis levels. By far the main source of BVD is the PI (persistently infected animal) which is born infected and produces massive quantities of virus for its entire life. PIs quickly infect unprotected cattle by direct contact or indirectly via unwashed equipment, vehicles or clothing. They may look perfectly healthy, but PIs are a continuous risk to the rest of your herd: **Get rid of known PIs immediately.** There are two possible disposal routes: direct to the abattoir (not via the mart) or kill them on farm. PIs are not permitted to move to any other holding with live cattle – this includes your own within-business holdings (formerly known as links) and livestock markets.

Work with your vet to check your herd's status, identify any PIs and remove them as soon as you can. Money spent on testing and prevention measures (e.g. vaccination, double fencing) is recouped in increased milk production, improved calf survival and reduced antibiotic costs.

For more information about eradication in your herd, contact your vet; for assistance with using the BVD database on ScotEID, phone the helpline on 01466 794323; and for advice on BVD policy, ring the BVD team on 0300 244 9877 or email bvd@gov.scot.