

Culling PI calves is essential as they are always a risk

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“When a PI animal is present in a herd, it puts the next generation of calves at risk.”

A BVD investigation in a dairy herd shows.”

Background

A block calving dairy herd from south Co. Carlow, Ireland referred two calves to the University Veterinary Hospital with neurological signs and a history of smaller than normal calves.

Preliminary Indication

A diagnosis of congenital hydrocephalus and cerebellar hypoplasia was made in both cases. These lesions are commonly seen with late term BVD virus infection. A tissue sample from both calves tested negative for BVD virus antigen. These tissue samples were taken directly after birth as part of the national BVD eradication program through ear tag notching.

Further Development

On farm investigation showed more calves with neurological signs, several small calves and some cases of diarrhea plus two PI calves. By taking a detailed history and looking at the timelines, it is suspected that there was a mucosal disease case in 2011, which was present on farm during the PI, risk period for the 2012 calf crop. This resulted in the birth of four PI calves, which were retained on the farm putting the 2013 calf crop at risk leading to the BVD related problems that were seen including the birth of more PI calves.

After reviewing the biosecurity risks several possible sources of infection were identified including multiple neighboring farms and purchasing a breeding bull.

Treatment Applied

The farm will continue to tissue tag all calves as part of the National Eradication Scheme and any that are confirmed, as PIs will be culled as soon as possible.

It was not practical to double fence the farm but the farmer plans to ensure that considers the risks of BVD when purchasing bulls in the future.

Result

Participation is now compulsory in Northern Ireland for all calves born after 1st March 2016 so this herd will continue screening as part of this scheme.

Questions

Q1. Which of these was NOT identified as a biosecurity risk on this farm?

1. Purchasing a breeding bull.
- 2. Contact with sheep.**
3. Multiple neighboring farms.

Q2. This farm is going to continue monitoring its BVD status by which method?

1. Bulk milk PCR testing.
2. Youngstock screening (5-10 bloods from animals over 9 months).
- 3. Tissue tagging.**

