TB Testing - Zero Tolerance

It is a misconception that new rules are being applied to statutory TB testing from 1 January 2014; there has, for some time, been a requirement for cattle to be tested within a two month window at intervals dictated by AHVLA. If the required animals have not been tested and the results of the test submitted by the last date of this two month window immediate movement restrictions have been applied until a test chart showing a clear test has been submitted. Penalties may also have been applied to the SFP on holdings that go overdue but this has generally not been enacted until a test is at least three months overdue. The changes brought into force from 1 January do not change these rules but are allowing less leeway.

You will be notified by AHVLA of any statutory testing required two months before the start of the testing window. We would recommend that you contact us to arrange your test as soon as you receive this notification since, due to the vast increase in the amount of TB testing we are being required to do, we cannot guarantee being able to carry out testing at short notice. It may be that some flexibility in your choice of vet may also be necessary to ensure that your herd’s test is carried out on time.

When we book in a TB test we are now required to notify AHVLA of the date and time it has been arranged for. AHVLA then reserve the right to send staff to attend the test to ensure all animals are correctly identified and that we are carrying out the test according to AHVLA protocols. We have no knowledge whether or when AHVLA staff may attend any TB test.

Following a TB test we are now required to submit a completed test chart within two days. This will be greatly facilitated if cattle are correctly identified with appropriate ear tags and if movement records are up to date both on farm and at BCMS. We are required to report to AHVLA if movement records are not up to date, if animals cannot be accounted for or if ear tags are missing. (If a few tags are found to be missing on the first day of the test replacement tags can now usually be sourced by the second day of the test allowing them to be inserted as the test is read.)

Movement restrictions will be applied, as they were before, to any holding on which a statutory TB test has not been completed, including submission of a completed test chart, by the last day of the two month testing window. AHVLA will also inform the RPA of a failure to complete the test on time and an immediate penalty will now be applied to the holding’s SFP. This will start at 1% of the SFP and increase as the test becomes increasingly overdue.

If you have real concerns that it will not be possible to complete a test within the given window it is possible to apply to AHVLA to bring the test forwards (but not to delay it!) but generally such changes to the window during which a test is due will only be made on a single occasion. In the case of unforeseen or extenuating circumstances a written application to delay testing may be considered by AHVLA.

It may also have come to your attention that ‘for reasons of transparency and to comply with European law’ AHVLA are progressing with their plans to put TB testing and other OV duties out to competitive tender. The tender process is due to start in April. The country has been divided by AHVLA into a number of regions (our clients who farm in Wiltshire and Dorset with CPHH numbers starting with 45 or 11 respectively will be in region 2 - the South-West - and those who farm in Hampshire with CPHH numbers starting with 15 will be in region 3 - the South-East) and applications to tender for the work in each of these regions are expected to be invited soon. Central government has stated that the quality assurance element of any tender bid will receive prominence during consideration of who to award the work to (but the decision is likely to be dependent mainly on cost!) and that the intention is that the majority of the work will be carried out by local small businesses, ie: the veterinary practices who are currently doing the work. There is no guarantee, however, that this will be the case. In order to maximise our chances of retaining this work the XLVets practices in the regions have grouped together to form new companies to tender and hopefully deliver the required services collaboratively. If you receive notification of a TB test becoming due and stating that it is to be carried out by XLFarmcare, don’t worry. This is the name of the XLVets company set up to provide OV services. The work will still be carried out by vets you know from Endell Veterinary Group and you should continue to contact us to arrange for your testing to be carried out.

Keith Cutler
On Wednesday 11 December 2013, Endell Veterinary Group hosted a client meeting with an exciting new format. The idea came from two of our vets, Neil Fox and Jim Willshire. Neil organised the evening with the help of our Livestock Technician, Barry Ewens. Based on the popular BBC Question Time show, a panel of six agricultural experts were invited to answer questions from Endell Veterinary Group’s farm clients. The evening was chaired by Jim Willshire at the Salisbury Livestock Market. The panel was as follows:

- Keith Cutler MRCVS (Farm Animal Partner at Endell Vet Group)
- Richard Young (The Sustainable Food Trust)
- Dr Andrew Paterson (AHVLA South East Regional Veterinary Lead)
- John Elliot (NFU Mutual Non-executive Director)
- Alan Wight (Pathologist at AHVLA Winchester)
- Minette Batters (NFU County Chair and Founder of Ladies in Beef)

Following a mulled wine and Christmas buffet reception, the audience made their way into the main meeting hall for the evening’s entertainment. There was lively discussion all evening as the panel debated questions on multiple subjects including Bovine TB, encouraging young people to work in farming and antibiotic resistance.

In particular Andrew Paterson (AHVLA) and Richard Young (Sustainable Food Trust) both impressed by answering a number of difficult questions from the floor. Richard on many occasions offered an alternative view point and managed to get his opinions across with both passion and empathy. Andrew’s discussion on the holistic approach of the AHVLA to control and eradicate of Bovine TB by working with all aspects of disease control was well received by the audience, despite initial scepticism. There were also a number of positive opinions on the future of farming and the opportunities available to the livestock industry. Minette Batters (Ladies in Beef) suggested that English farmers should follow the lead of Scottish and Irish farms and brand their livestock industry. Minette Batters (Ladies in Beef) suggested that English farms should follow the lead of Scottish and Irish farms and brand their products collectively to gain a premium. John Elliot (NFU Mutual) spoke of the increased standards of living across the world and how this will lead to greater consumption of meat and dairy products providing an opportunity for British farms.

In summary, the meeting was extremely successful and our clients who attended had a great evening. The practice intends to build on the success of the evening with a second Question Time event next year. We were unable to get an MP or an RSPCA representative to attend this time, but they have indicated that they would be very interested in future events.

On this list we would love to hear from you.

Barry Ewens R-SQP (Livestock Service & Sales)

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**Endell’s People: Keith Cutler**

Why did you get into the profession?
I’ve always loved the countryside and wildlife/natural history. I wanted to be a gamekeeper when I was younger. At around fourteen years of age a career as a vet was suggested, so I started seeing practice with a local vet at home in the suburbs of London. I was spaying cats when I was sixteen, which wouldn’t be allowed now! My school careers advisor was doubtful that I would be ‘big or strong enough to be a farm vet’ and so I went to college intent on being a dog and cat vet. Seeing practice at Endell in the 1980s with David Kerr resulted in a change of direction and the rest is history.

Where have you worked before?
In my first full-time job (I did have holiday jobs on various local farms prior to graduating in which I managed to wreck a few tractor!)

What is the most amusing thing that’s happened to you on farm?
With hindsight, being noticed by the mad, aggressive bull I was stalking to dart and wondering if it charged me, would I have the balls to get the shot off before I turned and ran?

What do you do with your spare time?
With hindsight, being noticed by the mad, aggressive bull I was stalking to dart and wondering if it charged me, would I have the balls to get the shot off before I turned and ran?

- Cheese and onion.
- Cats and Dogs?
  - Dogs (I’d like a Welsh Springer).
- Pepsi or Coca Cola?
- Beer.
- Football or Rugby?
- Rugby.

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**LSS Department Services and Tariffs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disbudding Calves</td>
<td>£4.75 for first six calves, £4/calf thereafter + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbudding Calves (over 8 weeks)</td>
<td>£6 for first six calves, £4.75/calf thereafter + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehorning</td>
<td>£4.75/calf thereafter + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical Scoring (eg: mobility scoring etc)</td>
<td>£24.50/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic Sampling</td>
<td>£24.50/hour + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccination</td>
<td>£24.50/hour + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolusing</td>
<td>£24.50/hour or £18/hour when boluses purchased through the practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Milking</td>
<td>£24.50/hour + Sundries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cold Flaming</td>
<td>£24.50/hour + Sundries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liner Replacement</td>
<td>£100/milking (less than 100 cows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbudding Calves (over 8 weeks)</td>
<td>£10/animal + Sundries</td>
</tr>
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<td>Liner Replacement when liners purchased through practice</td>
<td>£22.75/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Hands</td>
<td>£18/hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSS Department Services and Tariffs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you feel there is something that would be of benefit to you but not on this list we would love to hear from you.

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**Introducing Our New “Helping Hands” Service**

We are pleased to be able to introduce a new initiative from our Livestock Service and Sales Department we are calling “Helping Hands”. As the name implies this service has been designed for those times when an extra pair of experienced hands can make all the difference and at an affordable £18/hour it’s perfect for those times you need help for just a couple of hours without having to employ someone for a whole day. For more information on “Helping Hands” or any of the other services listed below talk to your usual vet or contact either Barry (Livestock Service & Sales) on 07876 823912 or Sarah and Tanya in the farm office.

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- Pepsi or Coca Cola?
- Beer.
- Football or Rugby?
- Rugby.

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**Disbuds or Dehorns?**
Either (but disbuds are easier and less traumatic!).

**Skoda or Volvo?**
Volvo - I love my XC70 and will be gutted when it finally dies, which will be soon given it’s got 248,500 miles on the clock!
Are you ready for turnout?  
Hannah Bradon

It’s almost that time of year again! Livestock at turnout face sudden environmental changes, increased parasite exposure and nutritional challenges. We thought we would provide you with a checklist of the major points to consider when preparing cattle for turnout.

Parasite protection
To worm or not to worm? Due to increasing concerns over wormer resistance traditional practices of blanket worming all stock prior to turnout is no longer recommended as best practice and a more holistic approach to parasites is required. Please speak to your routine vet about what is most suitable for your farm. More information on available products can be sourced from Barry Ewens, our SQP, by calling the practice.
- **Lungworm** (*Dictyocaulus viviparus*)
  This parasite lives on pasture and mostly causes problems in late summer/autumn. Unlike other worms only a small number need to be ingested before disease develops. Vaccination is recommended for control of this parasite. ‘Huskvac’ contains irradiated larvae which allow cattle to be ‘exposed’ to the disease and develop immunity. Most conventional wormers will be effective against this parasite, however, with rigorous worming programmes immunity will not build up and this can lead to disease developing in older untreated cattle. Please ring the practice to discuss the options or to order your ‘Huskvac’ vaccine.
- **Gut parasites**
  The main culprits in cattle are ‘Ostertagia’ and ‘Cooperia’ worms. Late winter/early spring is the time to look out for ‘Type II Ostertagiasis’ which usually affects yearlings following their first grazing season if they did not receive an appropriate housing dose of wormer. Larvae ingested before housing have the ability to settle in the gut remaining inactive until warmer weather arrives (a process called hypobiosis). Emergence of these larvae causes disease which is usually seen as intermittent diarrhoea in individual animals (not a whole group) and can cause death. Other groups of cattle at risk of worm problems in the spring are ‘naïve’ autumn-born calves and animals being turned out onto pasture grazed last year by calves. Anthelmintic treatment should be targeted at the high risk groups. We can analyse faecal samples for worm egg counts at our laboratory. This will allow us to recommend whether worming is necessary in particular grazing groups and monitor parasite burdens throughout the season. Unnecessary worming can contribute to wormer resistance and cost you money!
- **Filfluke**
  Will there ever be a newsletter where this parasite doesn’t get a mention?! At this time of year adult/mature liver fluke can be a potential problem but the good news is most fluke preparations will be effective in animals that have been housed over winter. Adult fluke are the biggest concern at this time of year and products containing closantel or nitroxynil should be effective at killing fluke over six weeks old or oxyclozanide kills fluke down to ten weeks. At this time of year we recommend using a flukicide which does not contain triclabendazole (currently our only weapon against early stages of immature fluke) to try to prevent development of triclabendazole resistance. Faecal sample analysis can provide information about whether adult fluke are present. If so, treating now will prevent contamination of pastures and infection of the snails, so will have long term beneficial effects. NADIS provides a monthly fluke forecast as the temperature changes throughout the season (http://www.nadis.org.uk/parasite-forecast.aspx).

Disease control
Where appropriate, please remember to order your IBR, Leptospirosis and BVD vaccinations to vaccinate breeding stock prior to turnout. Clostridial diseases, which can also be vaccinated against, are also a concern in grazing animals as these organisms are found in the soil, and we regularly see sporadic cases of sudden death in adult cows. If you would like to gain an idea of your current disease status we have a scheme called ‘Beefcheck’ which allows testing for IBR, BVD and Leptospirosis antibodies. Six animals can be sampled for IBR and BVD and ten animals for leptospirosis with the testing paid for all of these diseases until the April 2014. This will require us to take some blood samples to send to the laboratory so please ask whilst we are out on farm (TB testing is a perfect opportunity!) or call the practice for more information.

Nutrition
The change from winter forage to spring grass can trigger nutritional disease such as bloat on leys. Being housed for winter increases the risk of developing sole ulcers and therefore it is important that lame cattle are treated early to avoid any unnoticed conditions progressing during the grazing season. We also have mineral buckets containing zinc and biotin for healthy feet which can be ordered. In dairy herds it’s also a crucial time to carry out a herd mobility score to assess the effect of your housing system on the cows’ feet. Considering our new lower rate of £24.50 per hour (and no callout charge) there has never been a better time to do this!

Feet
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Biosecurity and Purchase of New Stock  
Neil Fox

There are many routes by which disease can enter your farms including wildlife, dirty equipment, watercourses and escapee animals onto or off your farm. However, the most common route of entry for disease is replacement stock (including bulls!) that you have bought in without knowing enough about their health status. When a diseased animal enters a naïve, unvaccinated herd it can have horrible animal health and economic consequences. I’d like to give you an example of the importance of buying in animals to biosecurity that you will hopefully be able to relate to:

You introduce an animal that is persistently infected with BVD virus to an unvaccinated herd of in-calf suckler or dairy cows. You run a seasonal calving herd so all of your breeding herd are in calf and you run the cows as one group. The introduced animal will constantly excrete BVD virus which has the potential to infect every in contact cow in the herd. When an in-calf cow is infected with BVD it could potentially abort, have a stillborn calf or produce a persistently infected calf. These persistently infected calves must be culled as they may infect further in-calf cows and they will constantly challenge other calves with BVD when housed leading to respiratory disease and poor growth rates.

So in this scenario you could potentially lose the calf of any cows infected with BVD virus by introducing only one animal to the herd. Furthermore, when you group your calves the PI calf will reduce growth rates and predispose the other animals in the group to respiratory disease. How much is the loss of a calf worth to your business?

Finding Out About Your Farm’s Health Status
In order to create a biosecurity plan for your herd you first need to know what diseases you have on your farm already. There’s no point buying in high health status animals if they are infected with disease after they enter your herd. MSD are offering free lab tests of youngstock for BVD, IBR and Lepto on the Beefcheck screen. If you have a vet on farm before April it certainly would be a good idea to have them take some samples if you don’t know your current health status for these three diseases. Once we have received the results from these samples we will be able to give you specific advice on the health status of your herd and how to improve and preserve it.

Another very good way to determine the health status of your herd is by sampling sick animals for disease. For example, if you have an abortion outbreak we might want to sample the dams and aborted calves for diseases such as IBR, Lepto, BVD and Neospora. If you have a respiratory disease outbreak we might want to sample some of the calves for respiratory viruses and if you have a cow that is losing weight, having poor calves and has diarrhoea we might want to sample her for diseases such as Johne’s disease.

Protecting Your Farm’s Health Status
Once we know what the health status of your herd is, we will know what diseases you need to look out for when you buy in cattle. Accreditation schemes are available for BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis and...
and Johne’s disease. If your herd is free of a disease then you should be buying animals from herds accredited free of that disease or isolating incoming animals and sampling and testing them to establish their health status prior to entry into the herd. If we are aware that you have a viral disease on your farm then you should buy vaccinated animals only or isolate all replacements until they have completed the necessary vaccination course. A good example of this is the purchase of calves for calf rearing. If it can’t be avoided that the calves share air space with older animals or animals from other sources, vaccination with Rispoval Intranasal and entry to the group ten days later may reduce the incidence of pneumonia.

For diseases such as Neospora and Johne’s disease obtaining the history of the herd of origin is probably the most useful piece of information. If you intend to purchase an animal from a farm then we can ask their vet to disclose the health status of his herd. (I must stress that an Endell’s vet will only disclose the health status of a client’s herd to a potential buyer with the permission of the client and other practices will have the same policy.)

**Biosecurity and Bovine Tuberculosis**

Where you purchase your animals from is also important in reducing the risk of introducing Bovine TB to your herd. The farms that we serve are all in Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire and all of these counties are on yearly whole herd TB testing regimes. We continue to see a steady number of reactors identified at the TB tests that we do and some of these reactors are on farms that have no history of TB and with no farms in the neighbourhood with any history of TB. It is no coincidence that when we examine the movement records of TB reactors that they have often been bought from areas that are heavily infected with TB or have had close contact with cattle bought from these areas. I often joke with clients that they should be buying their replacements from Scotland, but in all seriousness, there are plenty of areas in the UK where TB is less common and this should be considered when you buy cattle.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the article there are numerous other factors involved in the spread of disease on your farm, but to discuss all of them with you I would need to write a book! When you carry out any investigation into the health status of your herd your vet will discuss the specific biosecurity risks on your farm in more detail with you. With the incentives in place through MSD and the potential losses that disease can bring to your business, biosecurity is definitely something that should be forefront in your mind. The selling price of animals and cost of feed are too high at this time for you to accept loss of animals and poor growth rates due to preventable diseases.

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### Is your bull up to the task?

**Will Sheppard**

With the spring calving season getting underway, most of you will know how many cows your bulls got in calf last year and how many calves you are expecting this spring. You should be achieving pregnancy rates of upwards of 90% in the cows put to the bulls. If this is not the case, have you thought of looking at areas you could improve on this year? If you have achieved this, well done, I expect you would like to repeat that again this year!

Now is the time to start thinking about getting your bulls checked and ready for the forthcoming breeding season and, if necessary, start looking for any replacement bulls. There are five areas that you need to consider with each bull.

1. **Mobility**

   Make sure that your bulls have their feet looked at and trimmed to the correct shape, even if they are sound and look ok. It is surprising how many bulls go lame just before they are due to start serving. This perhaps could have been prevented by a quick trim in the spring. Any bulls with growths between their claws, or serious defects in the hooves should be considered as sub-fertile and replaced.

2. **Body Condition Score (BCS)**

   Bulls in poor body condition will be less fertile than a bull in optimum condition (BCS should be 3.5-4 out of 5 at the start of service), therefore any bulls that are on the thin side should have their ration increased and be checked for any infectious causes of condition loss such as Liver Fluke or Johne’s disease.

3. **Genetics**

   Make sure that the bulls are not mating their own progeny and split the groups accordingly if they are. It is also worth thinking about whether your bulls are giving you the desired results in the calves they are producing. Most bull breeders should be able to supply the estimated breeding values (EBVs) for the bulls you are purchasing and you should be using these to help you select the characteristics you want. For example, if you had a bad calving season last year due to oversized calves then consider getting a bull with easy calving genetics. After all it is no good having a bull that throws huge calves if you lose 20% of them, or have to caesar half your replacement heifers!

4. **Bull Fertility**

   We would suggest that you test your bulls one to two months before they are due to serve cows so that, should they be sub-fertile, you have enough time to source a replacement. In the last three years we obtained the following results:

   - **Total Tested:** 292
   - **Total Fertile:** 215 (74%)
   - **Total Sub-fertile:** 60 (21%)
   - **Total Infertile:** 17 (5%)

   This shows that our own figures tie in with published figures, showing that about one in four bulls is subfertile or infertile. It is highly recommended to test every bull before each serving period as fertility is not guaranteed for life and can change from year to year. We have had several occasions where a previously fertile bull has suddenly become infertile for no obvious reason and the effects can be devastating to a business that is dependent on calves being born.

5. **Infectious Diseases**

   Don’t forget that bulls can be affected by the same bacteria and viruses that affect cows, with similar effects on their fertility. Always ensure that new bulls are tested and vaccinated against the same diseases as the cows, or buy them from herds that are accredited free from the diseases you know your own herd to be free from. Any bulls that are thin or loose should be tested for Johne’s disease and any other issues relevant to your herd, such as Liver Fluke.

   If you find yourself in the position of requiring a new bull then there are a number of ways you can find a suitable one. There are bull sales for specific breeds throughout the year as you probably know already, we have a number of bull breeders we can put you in touch with and the various breed associations will have information on bull breeders available too.

   Please contact us if you wish to arrange a bull breeding soundness evaluation. As we get into March and April the diary becomes quite full with our regular semen testing herds so please arrange yours soon if you require a specific date. Also bear in mind that if extra manpower is needed for handling bulls safely then we can offer the services of Barry at a competitive hourly rate (see separate box). Please contact Barry or reception for more information or to arrange this service.

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### Caesarean surgery audit

**Keith Cutler**

XLVets, the group of progressive practices to which Endell Veterinary Group belongs, in the pursuit of ‘excellence in practice’ is carrying out a nationwide audit of bovine caesarean surgery technique and outcome to assist in defining best clinical practice. Although only 500 or so cases have been analysed up to now there are already some obvious (and probably not so startling) conclusions:

- The best outcome can be predicted when an early decision to perform caesarean surgery is made. The outcome is less good where strenuous efforts, perhaps over several hours, have been made to calve the cow before resorting to surgery or if the cow has been left in labour perhaps overnight before intervening.

- Needless to say, when cows have been trying to calve for several days and the calf is dead and infected, it is predictable that the outcome of surgery is likely to be even poorer although success can be achieved.

- It is also becoming obvious that sufficient assistance can have a significant effect on the outcome of caesarean surgery. In addition to the veterinary surgeon, an ideal situation would be to have three other people; one to look after the cow, one to look after the calf and one to assist the surgeon. Such a level of assistance is becoming a luxury for us on many of the farms on which we work in the essential that we do have at least some assistance immediately available when caesarean surgery is necessary - I’m just in the parlour; shout if you need me or the presence of an individual who cannot speak English and therefore respond immediately in an emergency situation is not adequate. Should sufficient assistance not be available we can, of course, provide it from the practice but this will incur an additional fee.
Calf Health

Poor calf performance and pneumonia are common concerns at this time of year when days are short and the weather is bleak. Attention, however, to management in a few key areas can make a huge difference to youngstock health and performance.

The importance of an early and adequate intake of good quality colostrum cannot be overstated. Despite this colostral quality and intake are rarely monitored by our clients.

Colostral quality will depend on many factors including the nutrition and yield of the dam. Suckler cows will not, of course, face the same yield challenges as dairy cows but nutrition during the period coming up to calving is often better managed in the dairy situation. Simply monitoring body condition and how it is changing will give some idea of nutritional adequacy and in the dairy herd assessing colostral density with a colostrometer is a cheap way of getting an idea about its quality.

Colostral intake, assuming colostral quality is good, can be assessed by testing blood samples collected from calves within the first week of life. The results can then be used to inform management decisions; it is surprising how many calves left with their dams after birth do not achieve an adequate intake of colostral antibody. A more proactive approach to management of the neonatal calf and colostrum delivery can often achieve significant benefits to future health and performance.

Ongoing nutrition is then vital to build on this good start. In the suckler situation this again depends on the nutrition of the dam but for dairy calves milk replacer is usually used. It is important that this is provided at the correct dilution, particularly at this time of year, to provide enough energy for the calf to keep warm, to grow and for its immune system to function properly to keep it healthy. Most milk powders are recommended to be fed at a dilution rate of between 100 and 150g of powder per litre of water so a calf being fed 2½L of milk replacer twice a day will be drinking between 500 and 750g of solids each day. At the lower end, at this time of year this is probably only just enough energy for the calf to keep warm. Add to this the fact that most of us overestimate the amount of milk powder being used (we regularly see clients diluting milk powder at only 80% of the recommended rate and have seen feeding rates down as low as 50% of the recommended rate) and it is easy to see why calves being reared at this time of year do not grow as well and suffer more disease than calves reared during warmer months. The time taken ensuring milk powder is being diluted and fed at the correct rate could very well pay dividends in terms of calf performance and health.

BVD can also affect the immune system of young calves (and older cattle) making other infectious agents, particularly those that cause scour and pneumonia, more prevalent and able to cause more severe disease. BVD, for all its complexity, is relatively easy to control and eradicate; individual blood tests can be used to reliably identify animals persistently infected (PI) with the virus (these animals will die of this infection and so should be culled as early as possible to remove them as a source of infection for other animals), cohort blood testing or bulk milk testing can be used to monitor a herd’s BVD status and excellent vaccines are available which should be used particularly to protect the health of the foetus during the first three months of pregnancy.

None of our clients who have eradicated this virus from their herds have regretted doing so thanks to the improved health and performance of their calf. If you do not know the BVD status of your herd please do not hesitate to speak to the vet of your choice about rectifying this situation. For those clients who purchase animals to rear please consider having all of the animals you buy tested to ensure you do not take delivery of any PIs. (Up to 3% of the calves born in herds where BVD is endemic and uncontrolled will, according to the published literature, be persistently infected with the virus and up to 95% of the national herd has been exposed to infection with 60% of herds having evidence of active infection.)

Youngstock are often the future of your herd and their health and productivity will determine the profitability or otherwise of your farm. It makes sense to ensure that they are looked after as best as possible!