

Chris Just BVSc MRCVS considers BVD from an angle we may not all be familiar with, yet.

In a fit of enthusiasm for the scientist inside every veterinary surgeon, I performed an experiment today. Not one that will place me amongst the likes of Mendel, Newton and Rutherford, in fact the only thing I share with these scientific greats is my brother's middle name (perhaps the source of my inspiration!). My tools were available to anyone with a smart phone in their pocket, a humble internet search engine. My theory to be tested was to establish how much the latest UK industry push has been noticed by the global eye of Google. So I simply searched pages 'in the UK' over the last 12 months for the word BVD; the result? An impressive 10,000+/- results! So the information is at least out there and maybe we are all talking about it; in fact the same search setting for 'Bovine TB' only yielded 8,000 results and we all know how much time down the village pub can be spent discussing that old chestnut. I was really enthused to see just how much more it meant to people than a past time like watching TV, so plugged in 'Strictly Come Dancing' with the same search settings.....oh dear, 1.7 million results. Maybe it is quality not quantity that counts!

In truth I was really encouraged and it suggests cattle producers are all talking about BVD and UK wide eradication could be just around the corner. You probably know all about it, maybe even are tackling it or even one of the lucky few who can confidently say it is not a problem on your farm. If not I can at least tell you something with absolute confidence, ask your vet if BVD is an active challenge to the health of your animals and within a week you will have the answer. It would be a start, and one the majority of cattle owners I suspect still haven't taken. Most of us rely on just vaccinating, this is not enough; the experts are telling us this, surveillance projects are telling us this and I can tell you this from personal experience. Go on, ask your vet.

What I did want to draw attention to was something even most BVD savvy farmers are not aware of, which is type 2 BVD (BVD-2). We in the UK have type 1 BVD (BVD-1) and although BVD-2 has been diagnosed in the past according to the 'AHVLA Scanning Surveillance Alert Notice' on BVD-2 (updated August 2014), it has not been diagnosed by Defra/AHVLA for a number of years. The problem is it is very much active in Germany and the Netherlands and the real problem is this is an even more aggressive strain of BVD-2 (BVD-2c) that causes uncontrollable bleeding and death. Because of this, these particular outbreaks have resulted in 30-50% mortality and on some calf rearing units 90% of affected calves have died. Bleeding is not a common feature of humble BVD-1 and neither is sudden death but the effects are just as costly.

We might sit comfy in the thought BVD-2c is the other side of the Channel, but there have been 30+ outbreaks of the really aggressive subtype in 2014 across Germany and Netherlands and in July alone we imported nearly 4,000 live cattle from these countries! The risk remains low but it is another reason to rethink BVD control; are you doing enough to eradicate and monitor for the presence of BVD in your herd? Please engage with your vet, national schemes and check our website for details of our own information road shows to find out more.

For further information, or if you are unsure about your herd's BVD status, contact your vet or call our Launceston practice on 01566 86985.