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Dear Sir

The paper from Truysers *et al* ( Veterinary Record 167: 566-570) is a detailed and welcome study on the progress towards the eradication of BVDV in Orkney. However there are points in the Introduction to the article about CHeCS (Cattle Health Certification Standards) which could be open to misinterpretation, and I write to clarify the origin and implementation of the CHeCS BVDV programme.

First, the article states that "The CHeCS programme ...evolved from .....HI Health and was sponsored by EC regional funding during the previous decade." The EC did not fund CHeCS, but through the 1990s it did sponsor the cattle health assurance programme for beef and dairy farms in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland known as HI-Health. In 1998 HI-Health, an Orkney-based, farmer-directed business was established with the objective of creating a pool of high health status herds. UK BVD control programmes evolved from a variety of early sources before a team of cattle specialists within the Scottish Agricultural Colleges (SAC) produced their Premium Cattle Health Scheme (PCHS) with programmes for controlling BVD, IBR, leptospirosis, and Johne's disease. CHeCS subsequently adopted the PCHS programmes as a UK standard.

Secondly, the paper states that the Orkney approach was based on the CHeCS programme. This is only partially correct as boundary biosecurity was always a minimum standard for BVD accreditation within CHeCS until the relatively recent introduction of the vaccinated monitored free (VMF) programme.

Clearly vaccination has always been a key part of the Orkney programme. To accommodate this, the CHeCS Technical Group, made up of internationally recognized experts and a technical member of each of the now nine CHeCS licensed cattle health schemes operating in the British Isles, accepted this VMF programme. Vaccines must be used according to the manufacturers' instructions. The Orkney programme advocates vaccination of BVDV antibody negative breeding animals only. The paper discusses the role of biosecurity and highlights problems that can be associated with vaccination.

I hope that this letter is helpful. HI Health is one of the CHeCS licensed health schemes and is thus audited on a regular basis but clearly with the increased interest in BVD eradication particularly in Scotland it is important to clarify any misunderstandings. The latest version of the CHeCS Technical Document, to which all licensed cattle health schemes must adhere, can be found at [www.checs.co.uk](http://www.checs.co.uk).

Yours faithfully

Tim Brigstocke  
**Executive Director, CHeCS**

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