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Industry campaign to control BVD launched

An industry led campaign to control and eradicate Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) throughout Britain has been launched. Vets and representatives from the beef and dairy sectors have agreed, in the first instance, to establish two working groups to develop an outline strategy and a communications plan.

BVD is estimated to cost the industry up to £60m per year. Cattle demonstrate a range of symptoms, pneumonia and diarrhoea being the most common, to infertility and foetal death. Unlike other EU Member States who have introduced disease control activities, Britain so far has no policy.

Cattle sector and British Cattle Veterinary Association representatives, together with researchers agreed, at a meeting hosted by Defra, that if the industry was prepared to take the lead, then there was sufficient knowledge and tools available to make a significant reduction in the disease. Furthermore, BVD eradication was possible in the long term.

Prof Joe Brownlie of the Royal Veterinary College said: "BVD is a serious disease that affects many cattle farms in one way or another, and it is causing significant financial losses for many farmers. Industry organisations in most other EU Member States are undertaking eradication campaigns and unless we get to grips with this serious problem, Great Britain will be left behind."

Dick Sibley, cattle vet and member of the England Implementation Group for the GB Animal Health and Welfare Strategy, said: "The Animal Health and Welfare Strategy aims to achieve closer partnership working and shared ownership and responsibility for animal health and welfare. Here is an opportunity to put the principles of the Strategy into action by tackling a disease that it is realistically possible to do something about. Both the dairy and beef sectors are going through difficult times, however controlling BVD could make a significant positive difference to productivity in many herds".

Prof Brownlie added: "I am greatly encouraged by the industry response, and the recognition that industry needs to take the lead role in GB, just as it has in other countries. I look forward to this partnership developing."