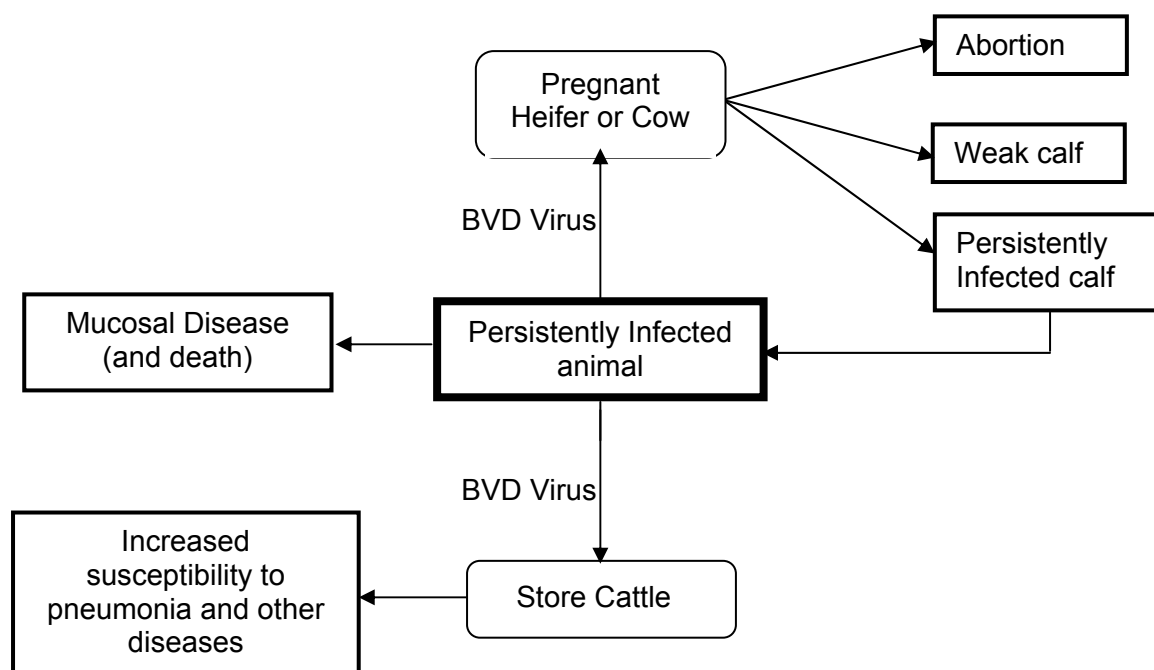


BVD and Store Cattle

BVD may be the silent assassin of many store cattle across the country. Although more commonly associated with fertility problems in suckler cows, this virus is just as dangerous for weaned store calves. The systems most at risk are those where store cattle are bought from various sources and housed together for fattening over the winter.

To understand the risks associated with BVD, it is necessary to know how the virus moves within a population of cattle and what effects it has:



- Virus is shed by persistently infected (PI) cattle and this virus can infect both adult cattle and calves.
- When a pregnant heifer or cow is infected then the outcome can be abortion, birth of a weak calf, or birth of a PI calf. This PI calf can then infect all other cattle it comes into contact with.
- When a store animal is infected then the BVD virus suppresses the immunity of that animal making it more susceptible to other infections, most commonly pneumonia.
- Cattle that have pneumonia associated with a BVD infection are less likely to respond to treatment, resulting in increased mortality and poor growth rates.
- Further losses may occur if those PI calves in a group go on to develop Mucosal disease prior to slaughter. This disease only occurs in PI cattle and results in loss of appetite, progressive weight loss, scour, lameness and death within 10 to 14 days.

Losses due to BVD can be avoided by sourcing your store cattle from herds that are free from the disease. This can be difficult when buying cattle at mart sales, however direct purchase from a BVD-free herd is a viable way of protecting yourself from this production-limiting disease.

David Gibson, Veterinary Investigation Officer, Veterinary Services, SAC
David.Gibson@sac.co.uk