

Culls, deaths & disposals

BVD and IBR are primarily diseases causing production losses. Diseased animals with these viruses can be culled for poor productivity (poor “lungs”, lameness, chronic scour, stunting, poor calves, etc) and therefore be missing from annual herd screens. The trail of destruction they leave behind will however remain for years.

It is best to dispose of carcasses within 48 hours of death.

Try to arrange for carcasses to be collected at the periphery of your yard / farm.

Record all deaths – even stillborn calves and calves which die soon after birth. Nobody can remember every detail for every cow for every year. Some diseases especially persistent BVD infection can cause infected cows to be serial offenders, losing several successive pregnancies.

Record which group (weanlings, sucklers, milkers, heifers, fat cattle, etc), the dead animal had contact with – you may need this information for detective work years later.

Not every aborted foetus is found – empty cows are not always barren cows.

Ideally submit foetuses and foetal membranes to your local RVL, but when this is not possible dispose of all aborted material carefully.

Put it in a leak-proof plastic bag, immediately when you find it.

Wildlife can often bring them back to areas where contact with cattle is possible.

Get a post-mortem / samples collected on all second pneumonia deaths.

Get a post-mortem / samples collected on all abortion outbreaks.

Get a post-mortem / samples collected on all quarantined stock that die.

Calves, which are born malformed, should be screened for BVDV. Abnormalities of the brain, eye (and skeleton) are just some of the possible outcomes, discuss any abnormal calves with your vet.

Clean and disinfect area where sick, diseased or dead animals have been kept.

Include all pens, ramps, equipment and vehicles which were in contact with these animals.

Keep contaminated bedding, milk, manure or feed away from healthy stock.

Don't sell BVD PI animals to other farmers for breeding purposes.

You can be an excellent spreader of disease. Wear protective clothing and gloves when handling dead stock. Thoroughly disinfect or remove these before handling other live animals.

A post-mortem at your local RVL will also include carcass disposal.

