

Beef Herd BVD and PI Informational Overview



Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) is currently the most costly viral cattle disease in the U.S. Animal Profiling International understands the importance of providing our customers with the information needed to protect their valuable herds.

API provides educational and testing services for the beef and dairy industry to identify the persistently infected (PI) animal, which is the main reservoir for spreading of the disease.

BVD control starts at the cow calf or dairy operation. The virus is mainly spread from animal to animal by close contact through saliva, urine and feces. A positive bull can spread it in his semen. The main source of the virus is known to come from an animal commonly referred to as persistently infected or “PI”. An animal becomes persistently infected when the calf is still in the uterus. If the cow is exposed to BVD virus during the first trimester (40-130 days) a calf can become “PI” and, once born, will shed the virus its entire life and infect other cattle. In a majority of cases, PI cattle look healthy and show no signs of illness. The only way to find PI animals is through diagnostic testing. BVD control also involves proper vaccination, biosecurity, handling and welfare management.

Key points about PIs:

- PI animals do not all die. It is common for them to look completely normal.
- PIs that live to be breeding females can transfer the virus to other animals in the herd – they will always produce a PI calf.
- PI animals cannot be cured. They will continue to shed large amounts of virus while living. Vaccination has no effect on reducing shedding from a PI calf.
- The PI animal needs to be eliminated from the herd. Once a PI calf, always a PI calf. PI calves should be humanely euthanized.
- If a PI animal is salvageable for meat, it may be safely consumed once appropriate slaughter withdrawal from any products administered is past. BVD virus is not a human pathogen.
- PI positive cattle should not be marketed. We agree with the following statement:

Statement on Disclosure of BVD PI Animals*

The cattle industry has a moral, ethical and potentially legal obligation not to sell known diseased or damaged animals to other parties without full disclosure. Responsible disposition of animals persistently infected (PI) with bovine viral diarrhea virus (BVDV) is an important component of BVD control.

The dilemma of how to deal with known PI cattle becomes more critical as BVD testing becomes more widespread. Appropriate disposition of known PI cattle must take into account the adverse impact these cattle have on the health, welfare, and the economic return of other cattle and cattle operations they may expose to BVDV.

It is widely recognized that a PI animal is defective and once confirmed, the PI status should be thereafter disclosed – as exposure to these cattle has health ramifications for all cattle, especially those intended for reproductive purposes.

Marketing or movement of BVD PI animals in any manner that potentially exposes at-risk cattle is strongly opposed.

**Adapted from AVC Standards of Practice and AABP BVD PI disclosure position statement, 2006.*

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