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Vaccination

Adequately vaccinated cows should provide their calves with an adequate level of passive immunity via their colostrum. This protection usually disappears after 3-8 months and this means that MLVs are likely to be blocked by colostral antibodies. Obviously this can affect the timing of the first dose of vaccination for heifers. If killed vaccine is to be used, then vaccination at 12, 14 and 18 weeks can be considered.

A common mistake in vaccination programmes is to give a single killed vaccine to first calf heifers that may never have received previous adequate primary immunisation.

As dairying farms/operations become bigger, the gap between the manager and the cow-side worker has also widened. This often means that what the manager assumes to be the standard operating procedure for vaccinations and what actually happens with the cows and calves is very different.

Identification and removal of PI animals from the herd

Tests that can detect the presence of live BVD virus in animals are viewed as necessary if the persistently infected (PI) state is to be accurately identified. Such tests include virus isolation, PCR on whole blood and AC-ELISA*, HIC, PCR or virus isolation on skin biopsies.

* best not used in calves under six months of age because of colostrum derived antibody interference.

Testing of pooled samples is a way of reducing testing costs. Also bulk tank milk samples can be tested if you need to screen large numbers of lactating cows. Obviously if a bulk tank milk sample tests positive, follow up testing of individual animals needs to be done to identify the positive ones.

You can have a scenario of an infected bull shedding virus. Therefore, bulls which test negative on blood test should really have their semen tested by virus isolation or PCR.

Once all the animals in the herd have been tested and PI animals have been removed, testing should focus on high risk animals such as new entrants to the herd, animals returning from shows, incoming semen and embryos and heifers reared off site.

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