

Diagnosed BVDV PI-animals in Northern-Belgium: where do they go?

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The key to Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus (BVDV) control in cattle is the detection and consequent removal of PI-animals. Data containing all cattle that tested BVDV antigen positive from a 2-year period from October 2009 to October 2011 in Northern-Belgium was investigated. Test-positive animals (BVDV ELISA or BVDV PCR) were considered as 'highly-likely' to be PI-animals. Laboratory data were linked to the Belgian I&R database to determine the location of the herd of detection of these animals. This was compared with the actual location and animal status of the detected PI's. This way, 'whereabouts' and animal status of these detected PI – animals were constructed. Data were mapped using a GIS system to explore the spatial distribution of cattle herds with detected PI animals. A total of 2,951 animals tested BVDV antigen positive. Tested animals originated from 1,076 different herds. Based on the animal status and location, we can make the following conclusions: only 55.5% (1,411) of the presumed PI-animals were classified dead without first being moved to another herd (either through removal or natural death), 13.8% (351) animals were dead but had been moved to other herds after their detection. 470 animals (18.5%) were still alive and present at the herd of the detection and finally 198 (7.8%) cattle were present on another location or 112 (4.4%) exported. The average interval between detection and removal was 49.1 days. During the study period, we retrieved a total of 1,356 cattle herds with evidence of the (temporary) presence of PI-animals (approximately 6.3% of all active cattle herds in Northern-Belgium). Although this is a non-random study, the results clearly illustrate that measures to encourage farmers to quickly eradicate PI-animals are crucial for the progress of BVDV eradication. Stakeholders should be aware of this if a future BVDV-control program is developed for Belgium.