

IBR Programme Update

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Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is a highly infectious respiratory disease of cattle that is widespread in Ireland, with evidence that 70% of cattle herds have been exposed to IBR. Use of vaccination is also widespread with almost 2.7 million IBR vaccine doses sold in 19/20- an increase of almost 5% over the previous 12 months.

In March 2020, AHI convened an IBR Implementation Group (IG), with membership from a wide range of AHI stakeholders. The main objective of the IBR IG is, with technical support from the IBR Technical Working Group (TWG), to decide on the merits, or otherwise, of a national IBR programme.

Drivers for the eradication of IBR fall broadly into the costs and impacts associated with the disease itself, and the potential impact on live trade. Both of these have been reviewed by Teagasc in a recent report presented to the Implementation Group.

In infected dairy herds profitability was reduced by an average of €60 per cow per year, aggregating to a national figure of €62M of foregone profit. Costs in suckler herds were more difficult to estimate, based on less available data, but analysis of suckler cow herds taking progeny to weaning reported the associated loss in net margin ranged from €10 to €21 per hectare. While caution is required in aggregating these data to a national farm level cost for all Irish suckler cow production systems, this results in an average cost per farm ranging from €350 to €735 per farm. Costs associated with losses in finishing herds, where the disease is expected to have a greater impact, are not available, but are additional to these.

The report also looked at the impact of a loss of live exports, evaluating the impact on agricultural sector income of a change from the current situation-the reference scenario- to one of no live exports, under either a soft Brexit scenario or a herd Brexit scenario.



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IBR ERADICATION PROGRAMME

Animal Health Ireland, 2-5 The Archways, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, N41 WN27



Under a soft Brexit policy setting, the no live export scenario reduced agricultural sector income by €138M per annum (4%) by 2030, while under a Hard Brexit policy setting the reduction was greater, at €160M (6%). While a cessation of all live exports is not realistic, progress being made in national IBR eradication programmes in other parts of Europe does represent a threat to existing markets, particularly for dairy bull calves.

Since the formation of the IBR IG, the IBR TWG has met frequently to develop a proposal for a national IBR programme that aligns with the requirements of the new Animal Health Law. In support of this work, a DAFM-funded PhD student, Jonas Brock working for AHI and based in the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (Germany) has been developing a national IBR model. It is intended that the model will support the development and evaluation of options for a sustainable national IBR programme by allowing testing of different strategies and their effects on the success, duration and cost of such a programme.

Where to get more advice on IBR?

Detailed information leaflets on IBR and herd biosecurity, along with answers to frequently asked questions on IBR and specific guidance for herds with bull calves that are potential AI sires, are available at from the Animal Health Ireland website.

