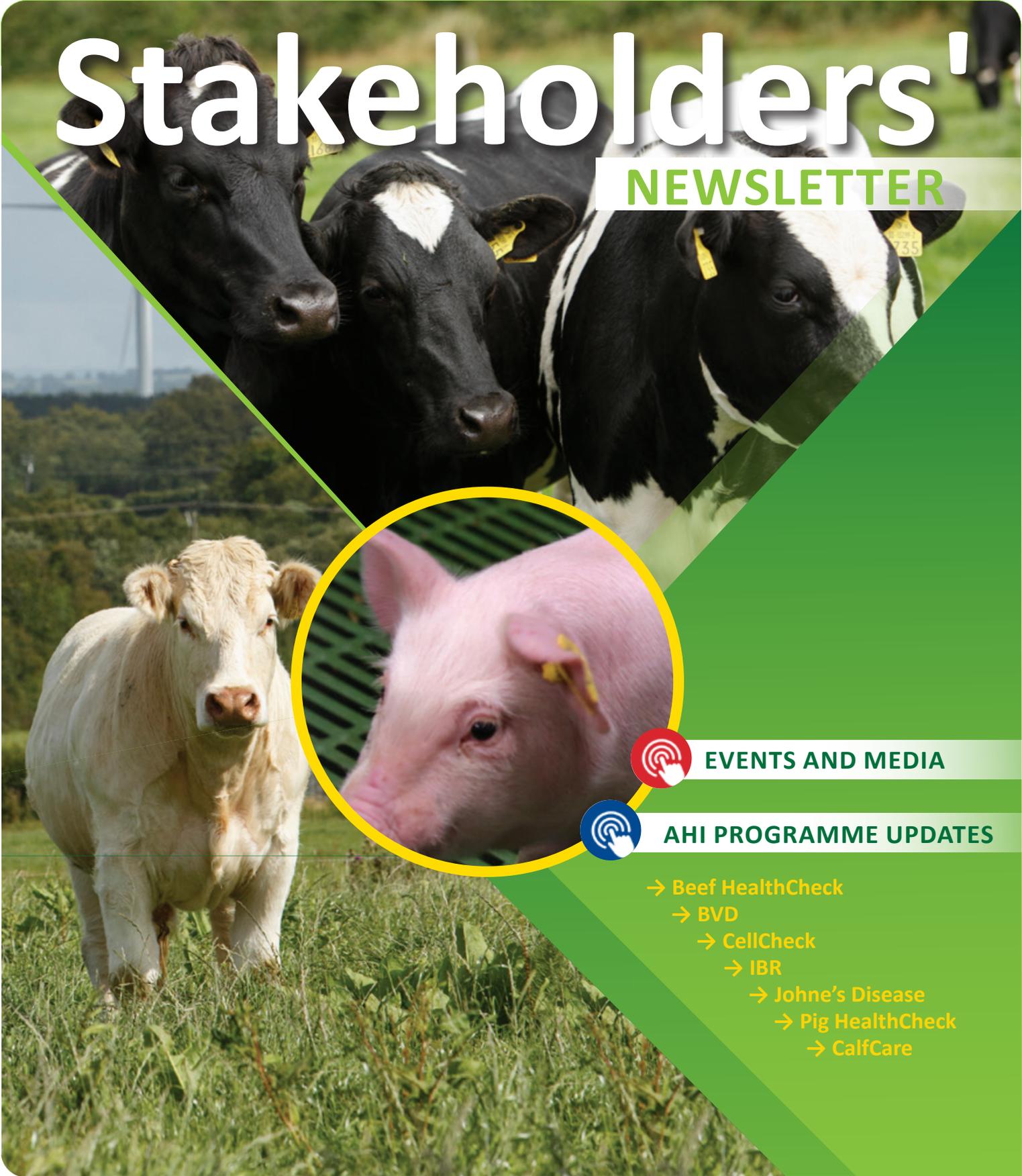


Stakeholders'

NEWSLETTER



EVENTS AND MEDIA



AHI PROGRAMME UPDATES

- Beef HealthCheck
- BVD
- CellCheck
- IBR
- Johne's Disease
- Pig HealthCheck
- CalfCare



AHI gratefully acknowledges the financial and other contributions of our stakeholders.



Contributing to a profitable and sustainable farming and agri-food sector through improved animal health

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Introduction

Dr David Graham, CEO, Animal Health Ireland

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Welcome to our newsletter updating you on activities during the first three months of 2021. As you will see from the reports, this has been another busy period across all programmes and sectors while also working within the constraints imposed by COVID-19.

January saw major activity across a number of programmes. In previous years, we have partnered with Teagasc and our dairy stakeholders to deliver a series of on-farm events under the CalfCare banner. This year saw a switch to on-line delivery and a broadening of engagement to both dairy and beef sectors. This provided the opportunity to develop and expand alternative delivery methods, including webinars, podcasts and videos. Feedback has been very positive, with useful pointers for next season.

The BVD programme also underwent a major shift in January, with a series of enhanced measures introduced by the BVD Implementation Group. These enhancements, described in detail in the BVD report and with significant funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, have resulted in increased workloads for the herds involved, their veterinary practitioners, AHI and DAFM. The enhancements are designed to reach a point whereby a national BVD-Free status can be recognised in 2023 in accordance with the conditions described in the EU Animal Health Law which came into force in April 2021. Associated with this is the ending of the compulsory national tag testing in 2023.

There was also a high level of activity within the Irish Johnes's Control Programme in January, as herds, and their veterinary practitioners, completed any outstanding tasks for 2020.

The Pig HealthCheck programme continues to progress steadily, with elements including assessments of biosecurity and risks for tail biting becoming embedded within the industry, supported by their incorporation into the Bord Bia Pig Quality Assurance Standards, while additional assessments to facilitate completion of salmonella control plans are also in hand. Work on the database to add further value to these assessments is also making good progress, with the first elements available to users later this year.



Introduction

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It is encouraging to see the data generated within the Beef HealthCheck programme, indicating that the prevalence of both animals with live fluke at slaughter or with evidence of fluke damage at slaughter have reduced by two-fold, or greater, since 2016. In addition, the information captured by the programme has been used by ICBF to develop and make available the ranking of bulls according to the genetic resistance of their progeny to liver fluke, allowing herd owners, particularly in areas of high prevalence, to breed for resistance. This Beef HealthCheck data, including the sire information, are increasingly important given the focus on addressing anthelmintic resistance, and represents one contribution by AHI, MII and ICBF to the Action Plan being developed by the Antiparasitic Resistance Stakeholder Group (APRSG) convened by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Looking ahead, the APRSG is just one of a number of strategies and policy initiatives across the agri-food sector to which AHI is contributing, including those addressing anti-microbial usage and resistance, greenhouse gas mitigation, biosecurity and welfare. 2020 marks the end of our most recent strategic plan covering the period 2018-20, and we are in the process of developing a new strategy document that will incorporate these areas within, or in addition to, our existing activities. Some stakeholder consultations have already taken place on this (e.g. on revised goals for the CellCheck programme), but we look forward to a more extensive engagement with stakeholders in the coming months.

Finally, a word of thanks to all of our stakeholders for their continued support - be that financial, participation in Implementation Groups or partnering in activities; to the members of our various Technical Working Groups who have given of their time and expertise; and to AHI staff who have worked tirelessly to ensure programme delivery during this period.





Events and Media

Gráinne Dwyer, Communications and Event Manager

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CalfCare Virtual Week

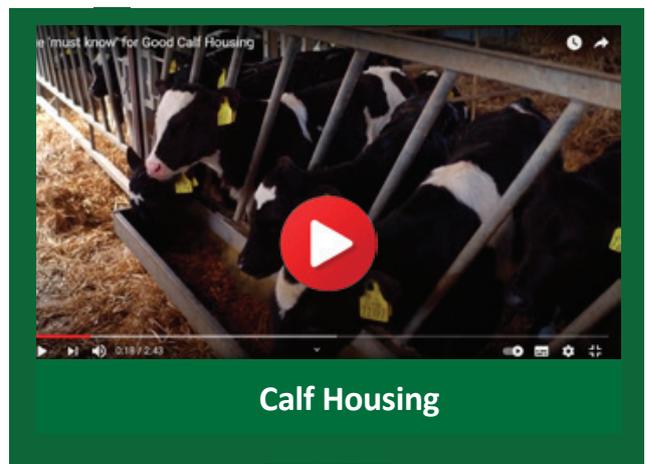
Animal Health Ireland and Teagasc worked in partnership to host and run the CalfCare Virtual Week which took place from Monday 18th of January to Thursday 21st. Compared to previous years, a more comprehensive range of topics were covered over the course of the four days beginning with practical tips on preparing for the calving season and concluding with the introduction of concentrate feeds into the diet of the young calf. Events over the week comprised two live streamed webinars from Moorepark Research Centre, Fermoy (Monday 18th and Wednesday 20th), videos, podcasts and on-line and hardcopy articles in the farming press. The target audience were primarily dairy and beef farmers (both sucker and calf rearers).

Nine new videos were produced and one existing Teagasc video was updated. There were two objectives in producing these videos. The immediate one was to produce the material for the Virtual Week, but in addition to continue the development of a series of resources available to Teagasc, AHI and industry covering wide ranging topics on calf health. The contributors to the videos were Teagasc dairy and beef specialists, AHI staff and members of the CalfCare Technical Working Group.

Topics included:



Preparing for calving



Calf Housing



Events and Media

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CalfCare Virtual Week (continued)



1,2,3, of colostrum management



Colostrum quality



Johne's disease control at calving



Vaccinating the pregnant cow



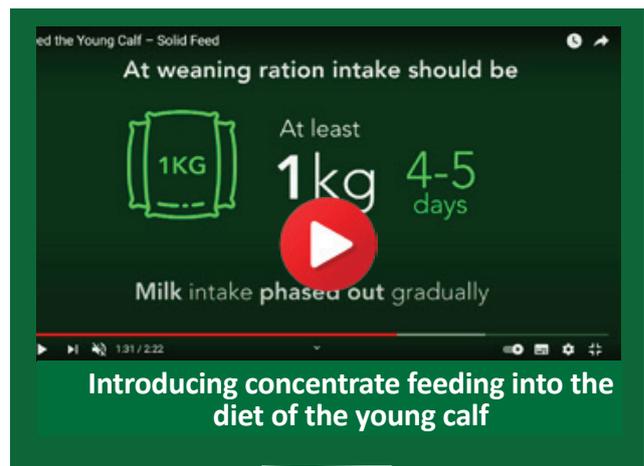
Diseases of young calves



Treating the scouring calf



Guidance on milk feeding



Introducing concentrate feeding into the diet of the young calf



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The Teagasc Dairy Edge Podcast was released on the 18th January, covering the topics of colostrum management and quality plus managing Johne's disease at calving. The, Teagasc Beef Edge Podcast was released on the 20th which covered the topics of milk feeding and concentrate feeding of the young calf.

The CalfCare Virtual Week received considerable coverage in the farming media, through both on-line platforms and print media, with reports and commentary on the topics covered over the week. In addition, a link to the AHI CalfCare webpage was distributed to all the dairy co-ops and beef processors. The webpage contains links to the CalfCare videos and the webinars. Attendance and engagement at the two webinars was very encouraging with over 1,000 farmers, advisors and industry representatives attending.

Publications

We continue to produce our monthly News Sheet covering topics relating to the CellCheck and Johne's disease programme and timely animal health topic. We also issued the spring edition of our Beef HealthCheck newsletter. These are in addition to our regular animal health feature in the Irish Farmers' Journal. All our publications are available from the news sections of our website [click here](#).

New website

We are currently working on a new website design which we hope will be launched in May. It will bring a fresh new look to our work with enhanced functions and searchability.





Programme Update

Beef HealthCheck

Dr Natascha Meunier, Programme Manager

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This season is ideal for farmers to make use of their Beef HealthCheck results to confirm that their housing parasite control has been adequate. If animals were infected by liver fluke in the previous grazing season prior to housing, those parasites will now be adults that are visible at slaughter if treatment has not been effective. These are reported as ‘live liver fluke’ to farmers as part of the programme. Since the beginning of the year, live liver fluke were seen in 1.4% of cattle at slaughter, originating from 10% of the herds that sent animals to slaughter. Flukicide treatment protocols need to be reviewed in these herds to prevent subclinical production losses. Ensuring that there are no adult liver fluke before turn-out will also help to minimise pasture contamination with liver fluke eggs.

In 2021 to date, 197,600 animals have been recorded from 12,400 unique herds as part of the Beef HealthCheck programme, with an average of 16,500 animals per week. This data is continuing to contribute to ICBF breeding values for liver fluke resistance and ICBF have developed a tool to help identify cattle for breeding that will produce offspring that are more likely to be more resistant to liver fluke. These breeding values are available for all AI bulls as well as animals that have been genotyped in Ireland and are accessible on the ICBF website.

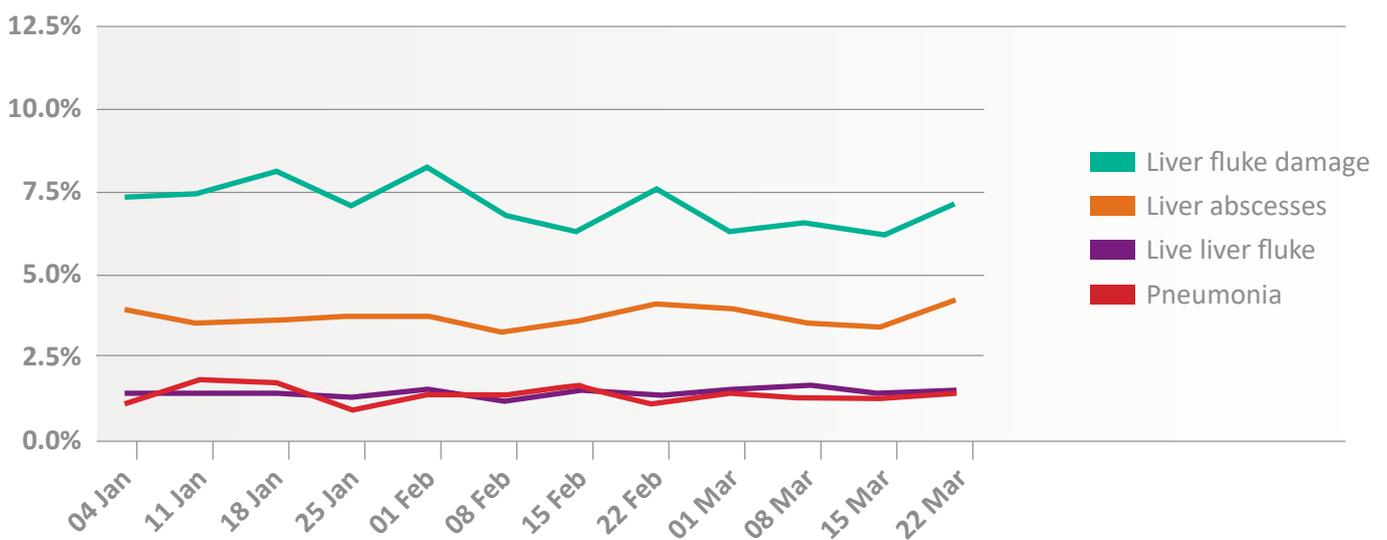


Figure 1. Beef HealthCheck results of health conditions seen at slaughter on a weekly basis for 2021 to date.



BHC Programme Update

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During the first quarter of 2021, 70% of cattle sent to slaughter were beef breeds with 40% steers, 33% heifers, 11% young bulls and the remainder cows and bulls. Levels of liver fluke continue to remain low compared to previous years with 8.5% of cattle showing any sign of liver fluke at slaughter. The counties with the highest levels of any evidence of liver fluke in animals at slaughter were Leitrim, Sligo, Roscommon, Longford and Donegal, ranging from 24% to 51%. Liver abscesses this quarter were seen in 3.7% of animals and pneumonia in 1.3%, which is slightly higher than last year.

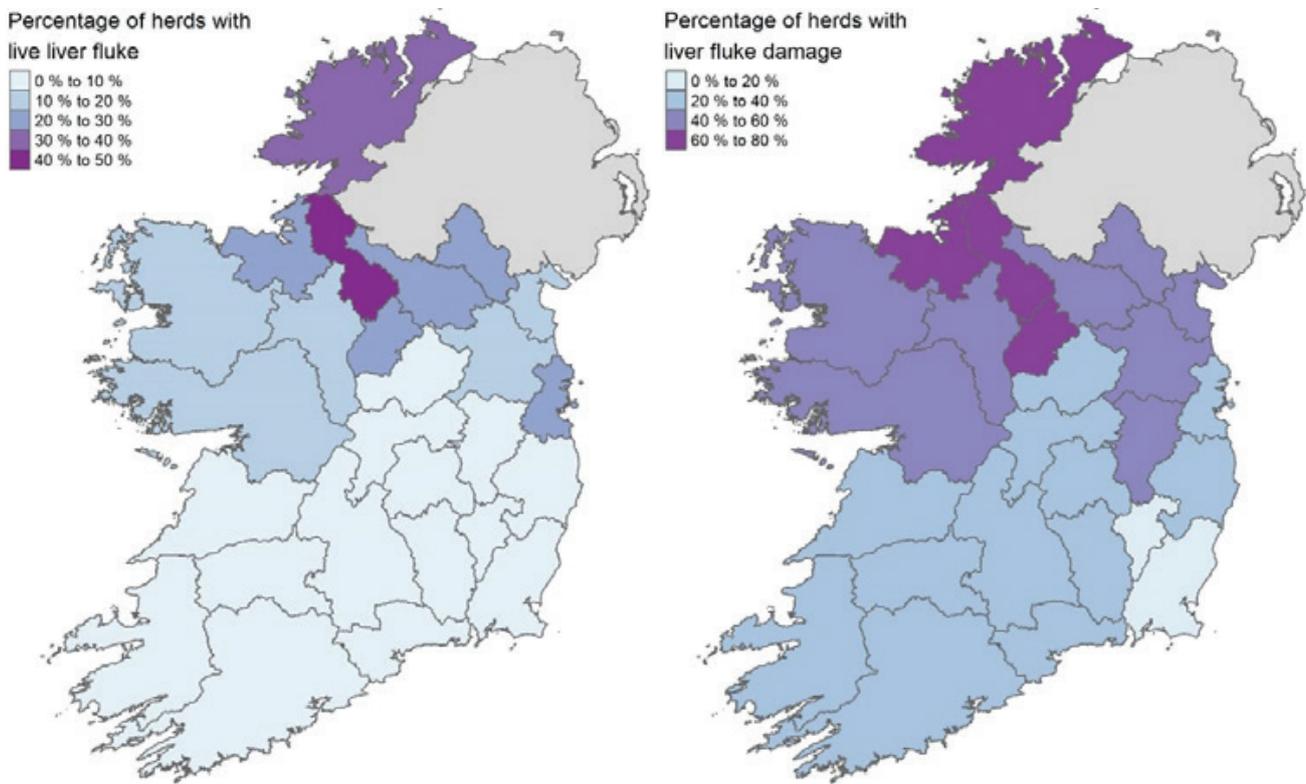


Figure 2. Percentage of herds with reports of live liver fluke and fluke damage per county for this quarter.

Programme Update

National BVD Eradication Programme

Dr Maria Guelbenzu, Programme Manager



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Results

By the end of March 2021 over 1.1 million calves had been tested, representing approximately half of the anticipated calf crop for the year. At the peak of calving (week 7) alone, 190,000 calves were registered. The prevalence of BVD virus positive (BVD+) calves' births in 2021 continues to decline, with only 0.02% of calves tested in Q1 being found to be infected with BVDV, with these being located in 0.31% of breeding herds tested to date. This represents a decrease in calf prevalence of more than thirty-fold since the start of the compulsory phase of the programme in 2013, when 0.66% of calves born were BVD+ (Figures 3A, B). At the end of the quarter, there were 93 PIs alive in 40 herds (Figure 3C). Updated programme results are available on a weekly basis online from the Animal Health Ireland website [click here](#).

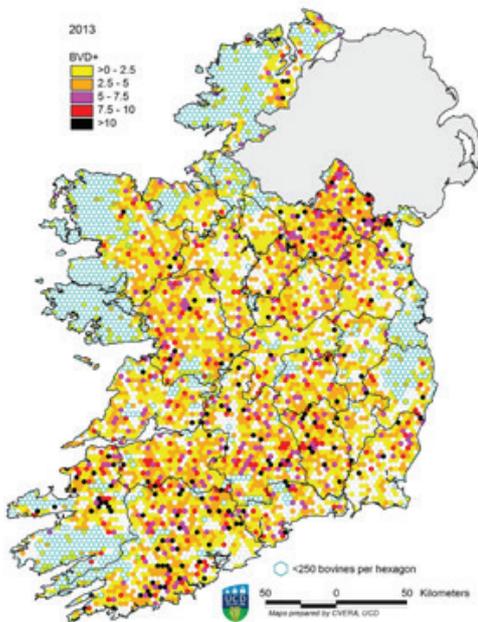


Figure 3A. Map showing distribution of PI births during 2013.

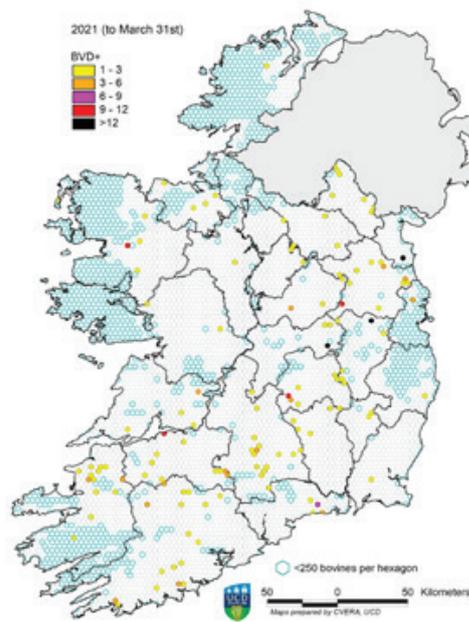


Figure 3B. Map showing distribution of BVD+ births during 2021 (to 31st March).

Each hexagon represents an area of approximately 10km².



BVD Programme Update

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Negative herd status (NHS)

The status of almost all animals in the 83,000 breeding herds in Ireland is now known, with the main exception being a decreasing number of animals born before the start of the compulsory programme in 2013 that have neither been tested nor produced a calf. At the end of March the number of these animals was approximately 1,500, representing 0.02% of the entire breeding herd population. The majority of these animals are in beef herds, and the majority are also male. Therefore, it is important that these animals are tested in the coming months. Herds qualify for negative herd status (NHS) by meeting the following requirements:

- Existence of a negative BVD status for every animal currently in the herd (on the basis of either ‘direct’ or ‘indirect’ results).
- Absence of any animal(s) deemed to be persistently infected with BVD virus from the herd in the 18 months preceding the acquisition of NHS.

By the end of March 2021, around 95% of herds had acquired NHS, with a further 3,600 only being ineligible due to the presence of a small number of untested animals. While an important programme milestone for any herd, NHS also brings with it an economic benefit, with the number of laboratories that use the RT-PCR test method offering testing at reduced costs to herds with NHS [click here](#).

To facilitate the identification and testing of animals of unknown or invalid BVD status, functionality has been added to handheld devices used by PVPs which will trigger an alert for those animals that requiring a blood sample for BVD. This functionality can be enabled as indicated in the guidance available [click here](#). The BVD alerts should be turned on during TB testing so that the status of all animals is clarified and the programme moves closer to BVD freedom.

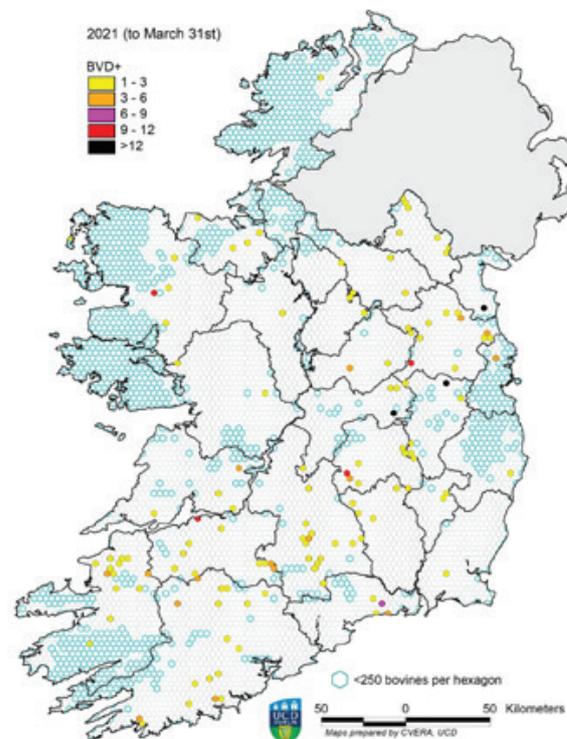


Figure 3C. Map showing distribution of BVD+ alive at 31st March 2021.

BVD Programme Update

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Key programme measures for 2021

The new Animal Health Law (AHL) sets out the requirements for recognition of BVD eradication programmes at EU level. Substantial progress has been made since the start of the national eradication programme to the point where the BVD Implementation Group (BVDIG) plans to apply for recognition of the Irish programme in 2021 and to meet the conditions for freedom by 2023. This includes having negative herd status (NHS) for 99.8% of all herds (currently over 95% of breeding herds) representing at least 99.9% of cattle and would bring to an end compulsory tissue tag testing for the majority of herds after 2022. To achieve this goal the BVDIG has developed a series of enhanced measures to:

- Maximise the proportion of herds (including non-breeding herds) with NHS.
- Rapidly identify and resolve the small number of herds with positive/inconclusive results in 2021 and 2022 and minimise the risk of onward transmission of infection.

Key messages for all herds

Outlined below are key messages for all herds in 2021, with a focus on prompt testing of calves and increasing the proportion of herds with NHS by testing of animals of unknown status, including those born before the 1st January 2013.

- **Tissue tag testing** remains compulsory for 2021.
- **Tissue tag-test all calves as soon as possible after birth.** Where positive or inconclusive results are obtained, remove these promptly to obtain the higher level of financial support provided by DAFM. Confirmatory testing of these animals is no longer permitted.
- **Negative Herd Status.** Herds will require to be free of confirmed cases for 18 months instead of 12 months, as previously. This change is necessary to align with the AHL.
- **Test animals of unknown status to obtain NHS.** Around 5% of herds contain small numbers of animals that either do not have a valid test result or have not yet produced a negative calf. The presence of these animals prevents herds attaining NHS and accessing lower cost testing. It is now a legal requirement to test animals of unknown status born before 2013, in addition to those born after this date.
- **Review biosecurity** to minimize the risk of accidental introduction of BVD virus, with a focus on movement of animals, people (including the farmer) or equipment or across farm boundaries [click here](#).



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Key messages for herds with positive or inconclusive results

- Immediate herd restriction and neighbour notification. DAFM will restrict moves both in and out. While restricted, movements out of the herd to slaughter or to non-breeding herds may be granted on a case-by-case basis under permit by the RVO, provided that the animals move directly to their destination. Neighbouring herds will immediately receive a biosecurity notification informing them of their increased risk, and on a monthly basis thereafter in the absence of removal of animal(s) with positive or inconclusive results.
- Isolation and removal of all animals with an initial positive or inconclusive test result; re-testing of these animals is no longer permitted. Remove these promptly to obtain the higher level of financial support provided by DAFM.

BEEF HERDS

- » €220 for beef breed animals removed with a registered date of death on AIM within 10 days of the initial test, reducing to €30 if removed between 11 and 21 days after the initial test.

DAIRY HERDS

- » Dairy heifers and dairy cross animals: €160 if removed within 10 days of the initial test, reducing to €30 if removed between 11 and 21 days after the initial test.
- » €30 for removal of bull calves within 14 days of the initial test.
- Cleaning and disinfection of buildings and handling facilities which may have been contaminated, as soon as practicable but in advance of the next breeding season.
- Conditions for lifting of restrictions. These will be lifted following completion of each of the following three measures by a nominated trained private veterinary practitioner (PVP), beginning at least 3 weeks after removal of the animal with positive or inconclusive results, and fully funded by DAFM/RDP:
 - » Whole herd test: blood sampling and testing of all animals in the herd with negative results or removal of any further virus-positive or inconclusive animals identified.
 - » Epidemiological Investigation. Conducted under the Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) within the Rural Development Programme.
 - » Vaccination of all female animals aged 12 months old and above by the nominated PVP.



BVD Programme Update

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- Continued herd measures. Following lifting of restrictions, herds are required to:
 - » Continue to tissue tag test for a minimum of 24 months after the removal of the last animal with positive or inconclusive results.
 - » Continue the vaccination programme in the herd in the following year, with this again delivered by the PVP and funded by DAFM.
 - » Not sell any potential trojan female i.e. that was in calf at the time of birth of the animals with positive or inconclusive results until its calf has been born and tested for BVD.

These measures have had an impact in reducing the period from test to removal of positive calves when compared to the previous year. Analysis revealed that in 2021 it took a median of only 2 days when in 2020 it took a median of 6 days. While this demonstrates good progress, it is critical that calves are tested as soon as possible and that positive animals are removed without delay in order to deliver further progress in the programme.

Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH)

During 2020 all herds with positive results were offered an RDP-funded TASAH herd investigation by a trained veterinary practitioner. These investigations seek to review herd biosecurity, identify a plausible source or sources of infection, ensure that the herd is left free from BVDV and agree farm-specific measures to prevent its re-introduction. Investigations have now been completed for over 362 herds with positive results in 2020.

Further details on biosecurity, including quarantine, are available from the Animal Health Ireland website [click here](#).



Programme Update

CellCheck



Finola McCoy, Programme Manager

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A consultation process was initiated, to facilitate the industry to agree appropriate udder-health and related targets for the CellCheck programme post-2020. This involved engaging with a range of stakeholders on a one to one basis, to gain their perspectives and opinions. This was compiled in a report, along with proposed targets for the future for further discussion and decision within the forum of the CellCheck Implementation Group.

All processors were offered the opportunity for a one to one meeting, to discuss the detail of their individual T1 and T2 2020 SCC performance reports. Collation and analysis of the 2020 T3 (September-December) bulk tank SCC data was concluded. The data shows that over the full 12 months of 2020, 65% of herds and 68% of milk had an SCC of 200,000 cells/mL or less. These figures are the same as 2019 and indicate a plateauing of udder health performance over the last 2-3 years. This is an important learning for the industry, particularly as it faces into a significant period of change in relation to antimicrobial use.

As part of their ongoing consultation process, the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) asked the CellCheck TWG to consider the subject of 'detailed prescribing guidelines for intramammary antibiotics' in the context of the new regulations being implemented in 2022. In response, the TWG developed and submitted a guidance document to the VCI, informed by available science and international best practice.

Findings from the analysis of the complete intramammary sales dataset have been written up and submitted for peer-review publication.



Programme Update

National IBR Eradication Programme

Dr Maria Guelbenzu, Programme Manager



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During the first quarter of 2021, IBR related work has focused on developing a disease model so that the different strategies developed by the IBR Technical Working Group can be tested and assessed before being presented to the IBR Implementation Group.

A DAFM-funded PhD student, Jonas Brock is working with the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (Germany) on the development of this national IBR model. One of the outputs, published during the first quarter of 2021, consisted of a new classification system for Irish herds that was developed as part of this work by combining expert knowledge and a machine-learning algorithm called self-organising-maps (SOMs) (Brock et al., 2021). This approach was applied to the cattle sector in Ireland, generating a detailed understanding of herd categories which will assist with on-going discussions on control and surveillance for both IBR and bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD). In total, seventeen herd categories were identified (Figure 4).

In addition, having demonstrated its representativeness of the national herd, a decision was made to evaluate a regional model of county Kerry which includes 5,000 farms and 400,000 animals. The model has been calibrated and now the process of simulating the spread of IBR in Kerry and identifying primary, latently infected and naïve animals initiated, with the intention to progress the testing of different strategies and their effects on the success, duration and cost of such a programme. Initial results were presented at the Society for Veterinary Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine (SVEPM) annual conference which took place on the 25th March 2021.

Brock, J., Lange, M., Tratalos, J. A., More, S. J., Graham, D. A., Guelbenzu-Gonzalo, M., et al. (2021). Combining expert knowledge and machine-learning to classify herd types in livestock systems. *Sci. Rep.* 11, 2989. doi:10.1038/s41598-021-82373-3.



IBR Programme Update

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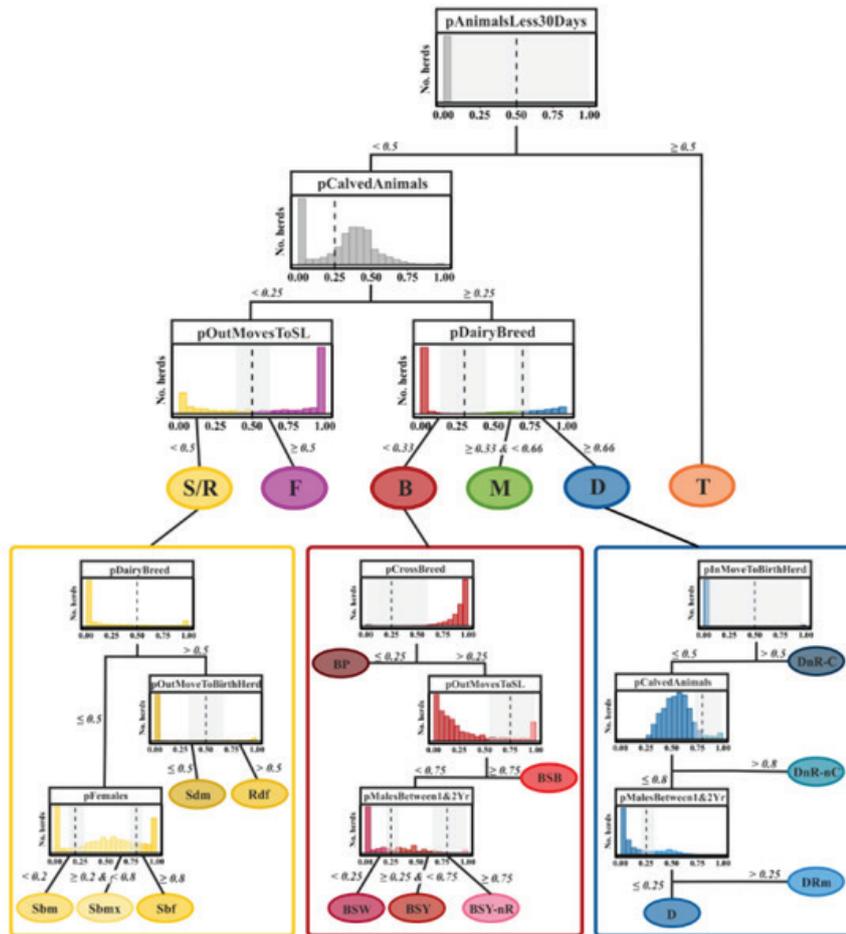


Figure 4. Decision tree for the classification of the Irish cattle sector.

Histograms represent herds remaining at the respective node.

Numbers and dashed line demarcate thresholds for class assignment.

Main herd types: dairy (D), beef (B), mixed (M), store/rearing (S/R), fattening (F), and trading (T) herds.

Dairy sub-types: dairy (D), dairy no rearing—contract (DnR-C), dairy no rearing—no contract (DnR-nC), dairy rearing male calves (DRm).

Beef sub-types: beef pedigree (BP), beef suckling to weanlings (BSW), beef suckling to youngstock (BSY), beef suckling to youngstock—no rearing (BSY-nR), beef suckling to beef (BSB).

Store/rearing sub-types: store dairy males (Sdm), store beef males (Sbm), Store beef females (Sbf), store beef mixed (Sbmx), rearing dairy females (Rdf).

The grey rectangles around the thresholds indicate the range in which the classification threshold would have to be moved in order to assign 10% of the herds classified in the respective step to the other class.



Programme Update

Irish Johne's Control Programme



Lawrence Gavey, Programme Manager

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At the end of the 2020 programme year (including the January 2021 extension), 1,327 (76%) of registered dairy herds had completed both annual requirements of VRAMP and WHT (Table 1). This compares with 1,376 herds (82%) in 2019.

		WHT			
	VRAMP	Complete	Incomplete	Not started	Total
Dairy	Completed	1,327 (76%)	65	93	1485
	Not completed	9	23	233	265
	Total	1336	88	326	1750
Beef	Completed	5	0	0	5
	Not completed	3	0	2	5
	Total	8	0	2	10
Total (Dairy and Beef)		1344	88	328	1760

Table 1. Completion of herd activities at end of Q4 2020.

There was a net increase in registered herds during 2020 of 99 (139 new registrations, 40 withdrawals), compared to a net increase during 2019 of 729.

In contrast, the rate of completion of ancillary PCR testing is improving (30% in 2017/18, 56% in 2019, 66% in 2020), and the number of herds considered infected because one or more animals with a positive or inconclusive ELISA result has not been tested by PCR (as required by the programme), has fallen to 372.

Johne's Disease Programme Update

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Of the 1,327 herds that completed both VRAMP and WHT, 308 (23%) were completed during the January 2021 extension of the 2020 programme year, confirming the value of the extension. However, the administration of the January extension overlapping the start of the 2021 programme year was again complex; as a result, testing assistance payments for activities completed at the end of the 2020 programme year were calculated and advised to milk processors at the beginning of March 2021.

A strategic review was undertaken in February to look at the promotion and participation in the programme. This review recognised that the programme is soundly based but complex; a re-focus informed by research of the motivations, disincentives and priorities of farmers; and simpler communications with enhanced support of milk processors and veterinary practitioners are necessary. A subsequent workshop with selected milk processors agreed to collaborate with social scientists to survey farmers and their AVPs, from which better targeted messages and communications channels can be used to encourage participation and completion in the programme. Resumption of veterinary training is also essential.

An alternative, simplified model for a herd assessment/assurance tool is being developed, aiming to provide an incentive for test-positive herds to apply Johne's controls to minimise spread and impacts without being adversely affected by categorisation.

Programme Update

Pig HealthCheck and Poultry

Dr Carla Gomes, Programme Manager



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In the first quarter of 2021, activities have concentrated on developing the Pig HealthCheck database and progressing new proposals for the National Salmonella Control Programme (NSCP) for pigs.

Central to the Programme is the creation of a database that will allow all data captured from the programme activities to be linked, analysed, displayed and benchmarked. In the last months we have been working on this and a prototype has been developed and will be tested by several veterinary practitioners and farmers during April. In the next months it will be improved and made available for all the pig farmers. This new database is being developed for Animal Health Ireland by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF).

The Implementation Group has agreed that bacteriology should be introduced to the NSCP. This means that environmental samples of finishing pens of all farms that are part of the NSCP will be collected once a year. These samples will be tested to see if Salmonella is detected and if so which strain(s) are present in the farm. This will help inform the farm action plan for Salmonella. Currently the details of how this will be done are still being agreed and in future newsletters we will disclose them.



Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

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Biosecurity assessments

As of the end of February, 201 units have been reviewed in terms of their biosecurity. External biosecurity continues to score higher (average of 78% in a score from 0% – poor- to 100%- excellent) than internal biosecurity (average of 62%) for these herds. Figure 5 shows the average results per section for external and internal biosecurity. Some of the areas requiring particular improvement for external biosecurity are feed, water and equipment supply. For internal biosecurity the areas requiring particular improvement are the hygiene measures between compartments, the use of equipment, and cleaning and disinfection.

Good biosecurity plays a key role of keeping our industry free from exotic diseases such as African Swine Fever, therefore it is important to maintain it at a high level.

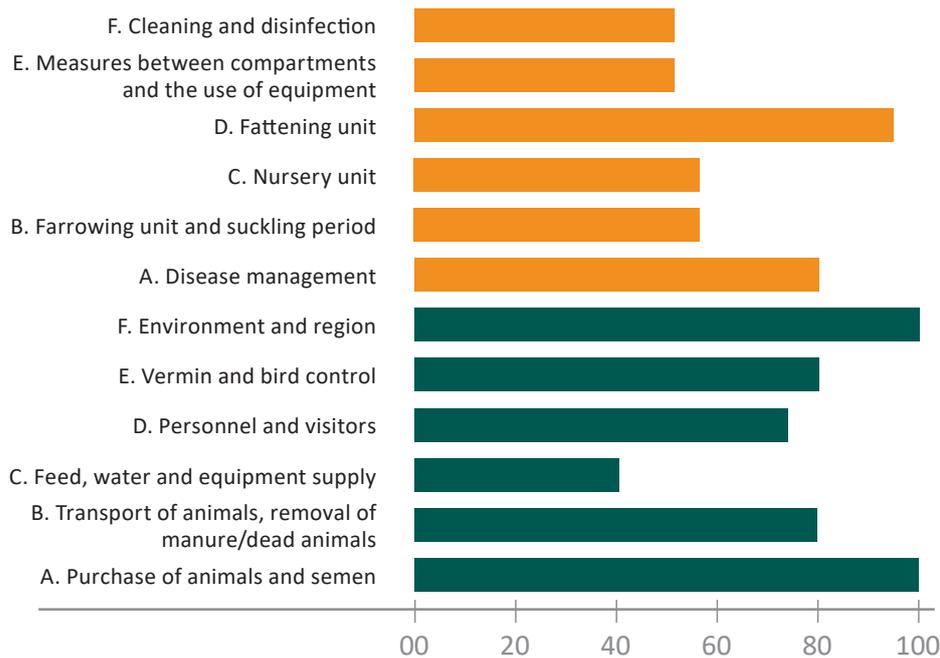


Figure 5. Average results for the sections that are components of external and internal biosecurity.

Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

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Risk assessments for tail biting

Rearing of pigs with intact tails is not a simple task. Carrying out a risk assessment to identify the risk factors present on farm is the first step in the journey to rear pigs with intact tails. By the end of February 172 assessments had been completed for 167 units. These cover around 45% of the pig herds with more than 100 pigs in Ireland. These assessments show that provision of environmental enrichment is the main area that requires improvement (Figure 6). In around 73% of the farms assessed, risks for tail biting have been identified.

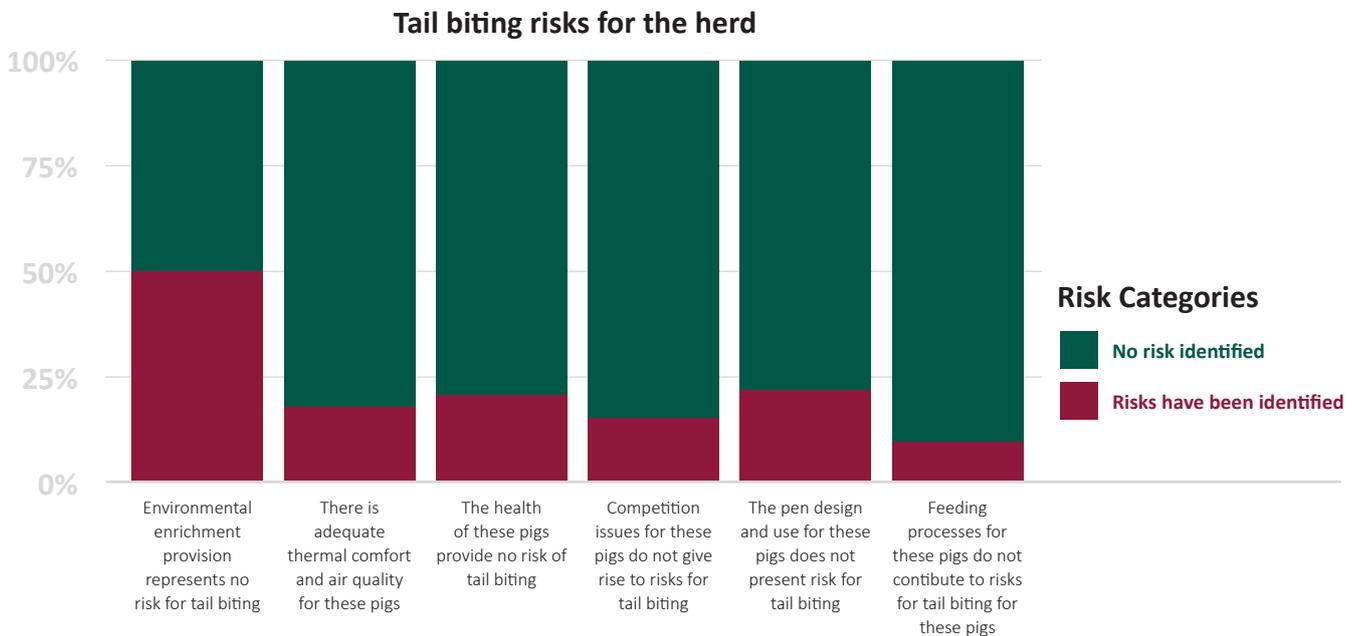


Figure 6. Results for the assessment of risk factors for tail biting for 167 herds. These results are based on the pen results, i.e. if risk factors have been identified in at least one pen in the herd it is considered that risk factor has been identified in that herd.

The Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) funds trained PVPs to deliver annual biosecurity assessments and risk assessments for tail biting free-of-charge. A list of trained PVPs is available on the Animal Health Ireland website [click here](#). Herdowners should contact their PVP to avail this annual service.

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Salmonella

A case control study to determine risk factors for Salmonella is being carried out in Irish pig farms by AHI and Teagasc. The aim of the study is to compare farms with high and low prevalence for Salmonella, based on the ELISA test results from factory samples, to identify practices that may be associated with the control of Salmonella. Based on the last 10 years of serology data for Salmonella around 60 farms (30 low and 30 high seroprevalence farms) were selected to be part of the study. If you have received an invitation letter to be part of the study, please do consider participating on it. This study has the endorsement of DAFM and other stakeholders in the pig industry, namely the IFA and Bord Bia.



Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

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Poultry update

Good biosecurity is paramount to keeping flocks protected from disease threats such as campylobacter and avian influenza. The Targeted Advisory Service on Animal Health (TASAH) funds trained PVPs to deliver annual biosecurity assessments using the Biocheck tool developed by the University of Ghent. This service is free-of-charge to commercial poultry owners. A list of trained PVPs is available on the Animal Health Ireland website [click here](#). Herdowners should contact one of these PVPs to avail of this service.

As of the end of February 2021, 191 units (234 surveys) had been reviewed in terms of their biosecurity for broilers and 66 units for layers. Overall, internal biosecurity scores are better than external biosecurity in broiler and layers flocks (Figure 7). The broiler units show a greater spread of results (from the top whisker to the bottom whisker) than the layer units, however this could be because much more broiler units have been assessed than layers units.

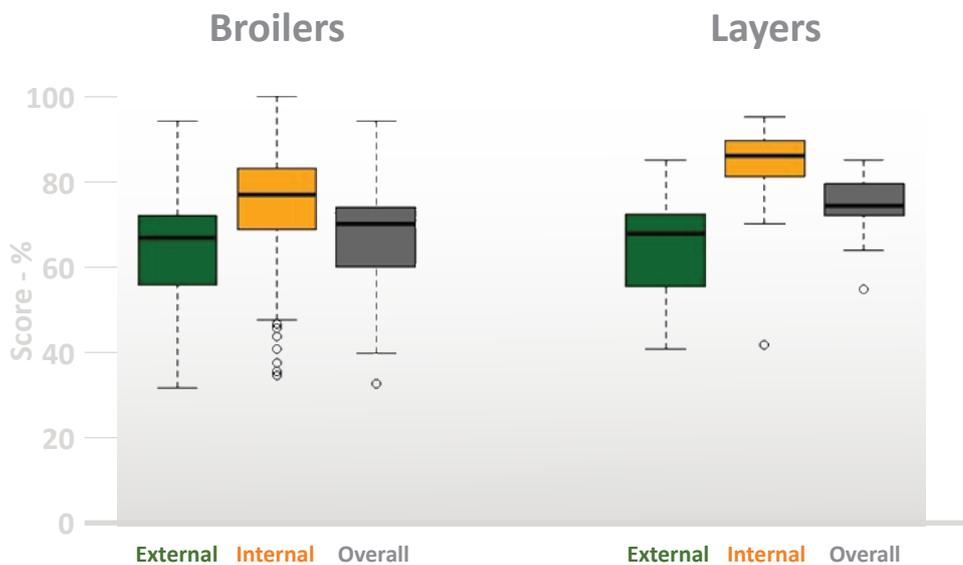


Figure 7. Biosecurity results for external (dark green) and internal (orange) biosecurity assessments for 191 broiler units and 66 layer units. For each area, the thick line is the median score (half of the farms assessed have scores lower than this line while the other half have scores higher than this line). The lower and upper limits of each box represent the distribution of flocks falling with 25%-75% of the distribution (i.e. the middle 50%), while the lower and upper ‘whisker’ represent the range within which 90% of flocks were scored (worst and best 5% lie below or above these limits). Open circles represent “outlier” scores individual flocks which are markedly different from the national profile.

Pig HealthCheck Programme and Poultry Update

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Thirty-nine of the 191 broiler units have been assessed more than once. Figure 8 shows the results for these farms, with an overall improvement between first and second visits. This was more obvious for external biosecurity than for internal biosecurity.

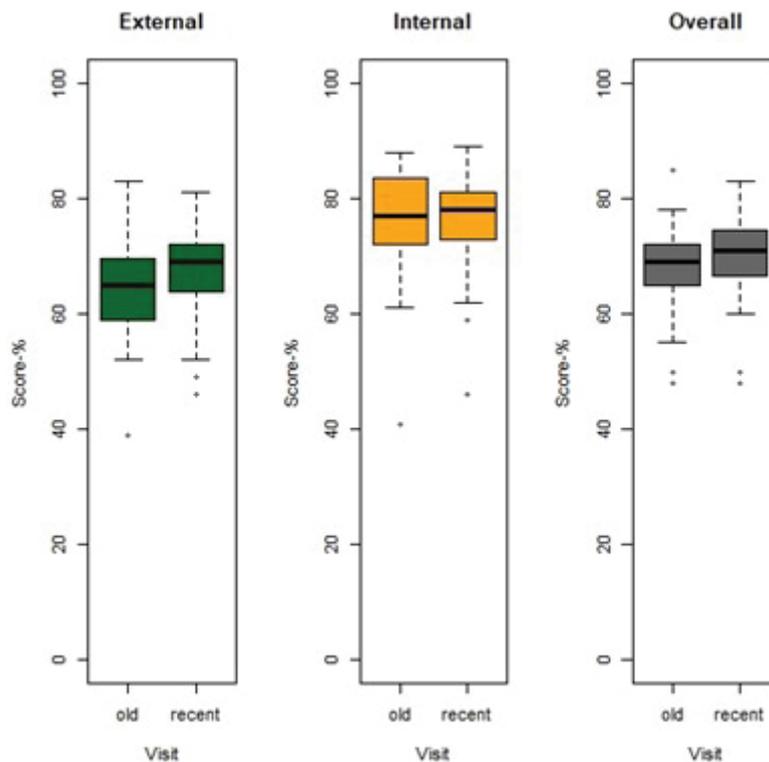


Figure 8. Biosecurity assessments for the 39 broiler units that have been assessed twice.

DAFM and CVERA are currently supporting a research project entitled 'Campylobacter- a One Health One Welfare Issue' and is due to be completed later this year. The outcomes of this project, which will draw on the findings of these biosecurity assessments, will describe the prevalence of Campylobacter in Irish poultry flocks and will investigate herd-level risk factors associated with Campylobacter prevalence. As the information becomes available, we will keep you informed and updated in future newsletters.

Programme Update

CalfCare

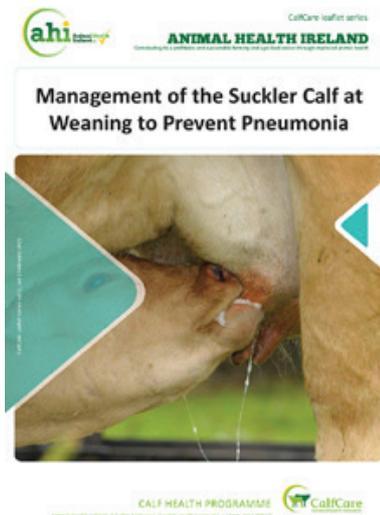


Michelle McGrath, CalfCare Technical Working Group Rapporteur

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This year got off to a busy start for CalfCare with the annual series of CalfCare events being held virtually over the period of a week in January, in conjunction with Teagasc. The hard work in preparation for this paid off though, as not only did we get many important messages out to a large number of farmers, but the videos that were produced are also now available on-line [click here](#) and are an invaluable resource to farmers, veterinary practitioners and advisors. We covered a wide range of calf topics in detail and got great feedback from the farmers which has given us an insight into future topics they would like to see discussed. In February, we were involved in delivering training on Colostrum management to Teagasc Dry stock advisors as part of their 'Beef Health birth to weaning' training for advisors that have been greater than 5 years with Teagasc.

We are continuing to review and update the remaining CalfCare leaflets. The most recent ones to be updated are *Dairy Calf Pneumonia*, *Calving and Care for the New-born Calf* and *Management of the Scouring Calf*. Some of these needed a substantial overhaul to bring them up to date. This will complete the review of all the CalfCare leaflets and the updated versions are available on the AHI website along with the new housing leaflets titled *Design of New Calf Accommodation* and *Existing Calf Shed Assessment*.



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The Technical Working Group in conjunction with DAFM, have been involved in the ongoing review, in terms of best practice approach to weaning and vaccinations. Future work planned by the TWG include the following:

- Review of housing for suckler calves.
- Development of resources looking at a reduction of antimicrobial usage in calf rearing.
- Review of calf welfare guidelines - including focus on disbudding.
- Development of resources for veterinary practitioners and farmers in addressing abomasal bloat issues.
- Summer scour in calves.
- Pre-calver minerals for cows – investigating the timing and mineral options with a view to promoting their importance in achieving healthy new born calves.
- Review the scientific data with regard to milk additives in the prevention of scour in calves.
- Summary vaccine schedule for calves and their dams.