



## **Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus (BVDV) INFORMATION SHEET FOR CATTLE OWNERS IN NORFOLK ISLAND**

### **What is BVDV?**

BVDV is a viral infection in cattle that is found in Australia and New Zealand, and is now confirmed to be present on Norfolk Island. The main impact of this virus is on herd productivity, resulting in increased abortion rates (up to 25-50%), poorly developed calves and increased susceptibility to other diseases. The virus is transmitted from cow to cow via contact with secretions, but does not transmit to humans.

Unfortunately, in the majority of cases of BVDV, physical symptoms of illness are often not obvious and may go undetected for long periods of time. It is most often identified once herd productivity has noticeably decreased over a few breeding seasons.

### **What does BVDV mean for Norfolk Island?**

The virus was first reported in 2006 when small scale testing was undertaken of a private herd on the Island and the results came back positive. Follow up testing undertaken at the April Muster 2009 identified that the virus is widespread amongst the common herd and is at a level that can significantly impact on productivity levels on the Island. From the cattle tested, 72% of the cattle had a positive result.

To put the potential impact of BVDV into perspective, a simple calculation can be done based on a conservative estimate of cattle numbers of approximately 1000 on the Island. If there are 600 cows (infected with the virus) that become successfully pregnant during the breeding season, it would mean that potentially 180 calves would not survive (based on a 25% loss rate). This is quite a large number and would impact on cattle owners significantly. In an isolated community like Norfolk Island, there is a possibility that eradication could be achieved.

### **What are the Options?**

There is a range of options available for the control of BVDV. These (in simple terms), are listed below:

1. Do nothing
2. Eliminate the persistently infected cattle which continually spread the disease
3. Vaccinate to build immunity
4. A combination of options 2 & 3

### **Where to from Here?**

Before any option is agreed upon, it is important to take two steps. The first and most important step is to talk with all cattle owners about what their preferred approach would be before any decision can be made.

If plans for eradication or vaccination are decided upon, the next step would be to look at putting together an action plan and seek funding so that we can move forward at the next muster in 2010.

**To gain a better understanding of the issues involved, an Information Session and Open Discussion will be held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009 at Rawson Hall Supper Room between 5.30 pm and 7 pm.**

**All cattle owners are invited to participate and put forward their ideas of BVDV management for the future of Norfolk Island's cattle industry. Further information is available from the Stock Inspector on 50 217.**

20 November 2009