

Heifer Development BVD PI Screening Protocol

The screening protocol is designed to keep Bovine viral diarrhea (BVD) persistently infected (PI) heifers from causing production losses on the heifer development and breeding facility. Because BVD virus is immune suppressive, other diseases like respiratory infections can be exaggerated with an underlying BVD infection. Identifying and eliminating PIs early can realize benefits of reduced disease and treatment costs for the operation.

It is critical to keep PIs from spreading virus to penmates while breeding heifers. Exposure of the fetus to virus during the first trimester will create more PIs. Our experience and results show us that the first calf heifer is the most susceptible for producing a PI calf. Both dairy heifer development and dairy beef facilities can benefit from a BVD control plan involving testing, proper vaccination, biosecurity and good handling and welfare management.

1. All heifers should be BVD PI tested negative prior to or on arrival at the facility.
2. Positive PI heifers should be removed and isolated immediately from the home pen upon first test.
3. PI positive heifers should be isolated in a separate part of the yard. A minimum of ten feet and no water or feed sharing is ideal.
4. A confirmatory sample should be taken from the PI positive heifer 3 weeks after original test. If positive the heifer should be humanely euthanized or if possible, salvageable for meat. It may be safely consumed once appropriate slaughter withdrawal from any products administered is past. BVD virus is not a human pathogen.
5. We do not recommend marketing the heifer.
6. Since the PI positive heifer was created during the first trimester of gestation, it is important to inform the source, if known, about the PI heifer. A system should be developed to identify which operations are sending positive heifers. Information should be sent to ranches or dairies about ways that they could improve their BVD control program.
7. Animal Profiling is committed to working with the beef and dairy operations to assist them in a program designed to stop PIs from limiting production. API has the following tools to assist heifer developers in providing useful information to beef and dairy clients:
 - a. BVD PI Positive Fax/Email template – One page sheet that alerts the dairy or beef producer about a positive calf.
 - b. Dairy BVD PI Screening Protocol – Outlines steps needed to eliminate the formation of more PI calves on the dairy.
 - c. Beef BVD PI Screening Protocol – Outlines steps needed to eliminate the formation of more PI calves on the beef farm or ranch.