BVD Testing – The Use of Ear Tissue Samples

The detection and removal of persistently infected or PI animals is crucial to control BVD infection and to prevent spread of the disease between farms. Whilst virus can be readily identified in blood samples from older calves, detection can be hampered in younger animals by the presence of maternal antibodies. As part of the “BVD Toolbox” of tests calves of any age can be tested for BVD virus by using ear tissue samples, where high levels of antibody are less likely.

Ear tissue sampling tags (TST’s) and applicators can be supplied by Biobest. These take the form of management tags in button form. Sampling results in a residual 2mm hole in the ear. The ear tissue sample becomes sealed in the collector ‘cup’ which is sent directly to Biobest to be tested. The system is easy to use and removes blood sampling costs.

Possible testing results:
   i)   virus positive – potential PI animal, isolate and re-test in 3 weeks time.
   ii)  virus negative – no evidence that this animal is a PI

Very occasionally no sample is found when the collector is opened; presumably the ear tissue sample is still attached to the ear. In this case no charge will be made for testing, but a further collector will have to be purchased to re-sample.

The costs involved are detailed below -

| Item                              | Cost  
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ear tissue sample applicator (1 only required)</td>
<td>£18.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tissue Sample Tag (TST) Button/Flag tag (1 required for each animal tested)</td>
<td>£2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>BVD virus test</td>
<td>£5.20</td>
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Prices are exclusive of VAT

It is possible to order Tissue Sample Tags (TST’s) as part of your official BCMS set. Please contact the office for details of tag suppliers that we can recommend.

To find out more about screening for a suspected PI and to discuss the BVD status of your herd contact your own vet practice or one of our cattle and veterinary team at Biobest. We can help you to establish the most cost effective approach to managing BVD in your herd.

Cattle Health Scheme Manager, David Kay (Edinburgh)
Deputy Health Scheme Manager, Karen Tait (Orkney)

Please see overleaf for a step by step process of how the test works.
BVD Ear Tissue Testing: How it works

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Ear tissue sample is sealed in the collector

Tag collector cups ready for preparation as sent in by the farmer

Cutting the collector open

Carefully removing the ear tissue

Ear tissue sample placed in tubes prior to testing by ELISA