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Reactions to the National Beef Welfare Scheme (NBWS) launched last month by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine have been mixed, but as with most things in life you will get out of it what you are prepared to put in.

Under the voluntary one-year scheme for IBR-testing and meal-feeding weanlings, you are being compensated to undertake certain beneficial actions. So if it covers your costs and leaves some money you are still ahead.

The scheme, funded by the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR), essentially replaces the old BEEP-S scheme.

For the new scheme, the weighing component no longer features as it is now part of the Suckler Cow Efficiency Programme (SCEP) while the faecal sampling and the calf vaccination elements have also been dropped.

What actions are required and how do I apply to the NBWS?

Firstly there are no optional components this time around – both required actions are mandatory

1 IBR Testing Each participant must commit to participate in the IBR testing action managed by ICBF on behalf of DAFM.

They are required to engage a PVP (vet) who will blood sample and test up to 20 bovine animals per herd, ideally nine months old (if feasible) or above if present in the herd, or all ages if there is less than 20 in the herd for IBRgE antibodies.

Where a herd has 20 or more bovines, a minimum of 20 must be tested. Where a herd has less than twenty bovines, ALL must be tested.

Payments per herd are set out below:

Number of bovines & tested payment rates

- Between 2 to 6 animals – €120
- Between 7 to 10 animals – €180
- Between 11 to 15 animals – €250
- Between 16 to 20 animals – €300

2 Meal Feeding Participants must introduce meal feeding for a period of four weeks pre-weaning and two weeks post-weaning to reduce the stress on calves at weaning time. Eligible suckler calves are those born between 1st July 2022 and 30th June 2023.

The rate of payment is €35 per calf for a maximum of 40 calves.



New scheme is next step to a national IBR programme

What's involved in the voluntary one-year National Beef Welfare Scheme and how you can apply

Applications Applications are online via your www.agfood.ie account and will remain open until midnight on September 12. Applicants may apply themselves online or they can get their approved FAS advisor to apply.

Once you make an application it will be up to you to make contact with the vet to arrange the IBR blood testing. The vet will then send the samples to one of the DAFM approved labs.

Because DAFM hope to make payments for the scheme before the end of 2023 both actions – meal feeding and IBR testing – will have to be under-

taken by November 1.

The maximum sum payable in the scheme is €1,700. For example, a 50-cow herd with 50 weanlings would get paid as follows:

IBR Testing – €300 (20 animals tested)

Meal Feeding – €1,400 (Max.

40 weanlings €35 x40)

Total Payment – €1,700

As with all schemes there will be a level of checks by DAFM. So particularly for the meal feeding action make sure you have meal dockets to show that calves were fed for the month



It's estimated that 75% of Irish herds contain animals that have been exposed to IBR and are carriers

The Pilot IBR scheme on BETTER Beef Farms

● A pilot IBR eradication programme was developed by Animal Health Ireland's IBR Technical Working Group for herds participating in Phase Three of the Teagasc/Irish Farmers Journal BETTER Farm Beef Programme. A total of 30 herds were involved.

● The pilot comprised the sampling and testing of a proportion of the herd for IBR ('snap shot' test), application of an IBR on-farm veterinary risk assessment and management plan (VIBRAMP), and provision of biosecurity and disease control advice.

● Results showed that over 50% of the tested herds had a negative 'snap shot' test, indicating the absence or low number of IBR-positive animals in the herd.

before weaning and that they are not sold within two weeks of weaning.

The receipt of the correct number of blood samples by an approved lab will confirm the IBR testing requirement.

Why feed meal pre-and-post weaning?

Research at Teagasc, Grange, has shown that reducing the cumulative effect of multiple stressors around weaning time results in a less marked stress response in the calf.

One of these stressors is nutritional stress where the calf's diet changes from one of grass and milk pre-weaning to perhaps concentrate and conserved forage post weaning.

By offering the weanling concentrates for four weeks pre-weaning and two weeks post-weaning you can maintain animal performance and reduce the nutritional stress factor.

This is of benefit if you decide to hold on to the weanling or offer to potential buyers. Meal feeding is cost effective in weanlings and the NBWS payment will cover your meal costs.

Why test suckler herds for IBR?

IBR is a highly infectious disease of cattle which is associated with the bovine respiratory disease complex. Infected animals recover but become carriers and despite appearing healthy may start shedding virus

when under stress (transport, calving, mixing of animals etc).

It is estimated that approximately 75% of Irish herds contain animals that have been exposed to IBR and are carriers. In addition to the impact on health and productivity, it also affects the trade of animals, semen and embryos.

Bulls with antibodies to IBR (including those due to vaccination) are prohibited from entering semen collection centres.

Why participate in the National Beef Welfare Scheme 2023?

By participating, herd owners will not only avail of funding to investigate the IBR status of their own herds, providing information to better manage risk, improve biosecurity and inform decisions on vaccination at herd level; they will also help to better understand the status of IBR in Irish beef herds nationally, generating information that will inform the development of a national IBR programme.

What should you do when you get the IBR test results?

All results should be discussed with your veterinary practitioner.

If either none or only one animal is positive to IBR, the proportion of infected animals within the herd (the within herd prevalence) is estimated

to be between 0-15%. At this low prevalence, screening of the whole herd to identify and remove any carriers present is justified where herd freedom is the target.

These herds should review their biosecurity to minimise the risk of introducing the disease (for example when introducing animals) and consider introducing/extending/maintaining vaccination, as agreed with their vet, to the whole herd to reduce the impact from a reintroduction of the virus.

If more than two seropositive animals are identified, the likely within-herd prevalence is greater than 15%.

Provided that the animals have been randomly selected, the results also allow you to estimate the overall prevalence of infected animals in the herd. In these herds, identification and removal of all carriers is unlikely to be feasible in the short term, and therefore other control measures are required.

It is recommended that these herds apply IBR vaccination as agreed with their vet to the whole herd as one of the measures to control IBR on farm. The vaccine makes it less likely that a carrier will reactivate and shed the virus, and less likely that a naïve animal will become ill and spread the virus after exposure.

Over time, with appropriate biosecurity measures, the prevalence should decrease as carrier animals leave the herd and are replaced by uninfected animals.

More information and resources on IBR are available at <https://animalhealthireland.ie/programmes/ibr/>