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Control of Infectious Diseases

The current high number of farm sales has led to an increase in buying and selling stock. Plans should be made in advance to prevent the introduction of disease.

General measures on farm

Foot dip, visitor control
Equipment disinfection (vet, foot trimmers etc)

Measures to consider when buying in animals:

a) Assess the status of your own herd

If your own herd is free of certain diseases (e.g. IBR, leptospirosis, it is especially important to be aware of the status of bought in animals. They should be free of the same diseases, even vaccinated animals may carry and spread virus/bacteria (e.g. IBR, BVD, salmonella and leptospirosis).

b) Assess the status of the vendor's herd

Some diseases are easy to detect via bulk tank and blood tests, (BVD, IBR, Leptospirosis), others are more difficult to detect in individual animals (Salmonella, Johnes disease and Neospora). For that reason a farm history may be more helpful for certain diseases than lab testing, and the vendor's vet – with his client's permission – should outline the disease history on farm, e.g. by using our standard questionnaire. He/she can also carry out any requested tests (at your cost), with results being available before the animals leave the farm. This may also include a private TB test. Depending on location, some herds may not have been TB tested for several years.

If your own herd is free of major diseases, introducing a new agent may be disastrous, as no immunity exists in the herd. Often the seller cannot be blamed for this – the disease may have been unrecognised on the farm for years, with many animals developing immunity and “just the odd problem”.

Bulls

Many “closed” herds may occasionally buy or hire a bull, and if this is necessary, he should not be forgotten, but extensively tested as he may be “the weakest link”. In the practice we have experienced severe problems by introducing untested bulls.

Hire bulls can be a particular problem and should be vaccinated, tested and treated as necessary. They also carry a risk of spreading *Campylobacter*, causing fertility problems and abortions. Sheath washing/antibiotic treatment should be considered. As some diseases are insufficiently detected by current tests (see above), testing can only minimise but never rule out a risk.

Summary of diseases to be considered in your herd health plan
(please contact us to discuss a “risk reduction plan” appropriate to your farm)

Disease	Possible control measures
BVD	blood/milk tests, vaccination of own herd and/or incoming stock
Leptospirosis	blood/milk tests, vaccination of own herd and/or incoming stock, antibiotic treatment
IBR	blood/milk tests, vaccination of own herd/incoming stock
Johne’s disease	blood/faecal tests, disease history
Salmonella	disease history, (faecal tests)
Digital dermatitis	disease history, foot inspection, footbaths, disinfection of equipment
Neospora	blood test, disease history, investigation of abortions
Campylobacter	Sheath washing of bulls, disease history
Liver fluke	Faecal/blood tests, treatment on arrival (including sheep)
Tuberculosis	private TB test if not tested in last 6 months