



Gwaredu BVD

Voluntary Phase Summary
2017 - 2022





Contents

Gwaredu BVD - Impact in Figures	3
Why is eradicating BVD important?	4
How was the Gwaredu BVD programme structured?	5
How successful was Gwaredu BVD Youngstock Screening?	6
How did Gwaredu BVD reward farms free from BVD?	7
How did Gwaredu BVD support positive farms?	8
A vet's view: Philip Thomas, Ystwyth Vets	9
Who did Gwaredu BVD work with?	10
How did Gwaredu BVD achieve its objective of increasing BVD awareness within the industry?	12
Did Gwaredu BVD encourage industry behaviour change?	13
What is the Next Phase of BVD Eradication in Wales?	14
Thank you from the Gwaredu BVD team	16

Gwaredu BVD was funded by the Rural Development Plan for Wales which was funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union.



Gwaredu BVD Impact in Figures September 2017 - December 2022

85%

Cattle farms
screened

9,369

Welsh cattle
farms screened



• A Screened Farm

29,021

Youngstock
screens funded

19,282

BVD certificates
issued

1,296

PI Hunts
funded

1,582

Suspected
PI's identified

100%

All large animal vet
practices in Wales
involved

Why is eradicating BVD important?

Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) is a disease caused by a virus that induces immunosuppression and reproductive failure in cattle. BVD can cause abortion, infertility, deformed calves, increased cases of calf pneumonia and poor herd health. The virus is maintained in herds by the presence of persistently infected (PI) animals.

Eradicating BVD will ensure improved animal health and welfare on Welsh cattle farms. A reduction in disease burden and the need for antimicrobial therapy will limit the occurrence of antimicrobial resistance. The reputation of Welsh agriculture along with its productivity will also be improved. A productive herd will result in a more profitable herd, with a reduced carbon footprint.

Due to the above, the Welsh Government prioritised BVD eradication in their Animal Health and Welfare Framework.

What were the aims and objectives of Gwaredu BVD?

Aim of the programme

To work in partnership with the industry to create and deliver a voluntary BVD eradication programme for Wales.

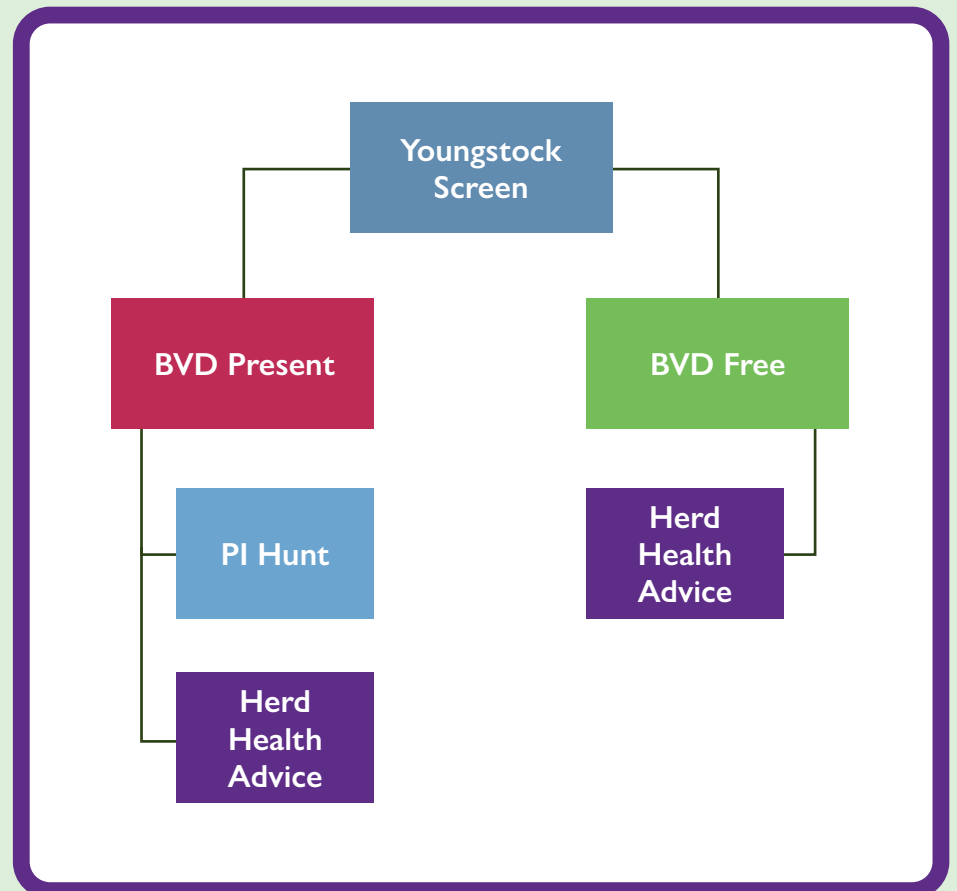
Objectives of the programme

- To raise awareness of BVD among farmers and vets;
- To support all cattle farms in Wales to determine their BVD status;
- To identify Persistently Infected (PI) animals that spread the virus.

How was the Gwaredu BVD programme structured?

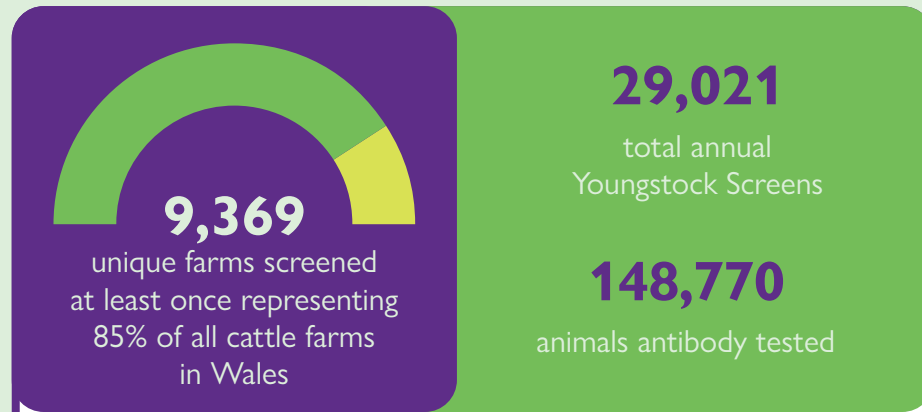
Capitalising on the annual TB test, all cattle farms in Wales were offered the opportunity to have a BVD Youngstock Screen during the same vet visit. This added value to the TB test, making best use of veterinary expertise, farmer time and animal handling to manage both diseases.

The results of this BVD Youngstock Screen then categorised the farms as illustrated below.

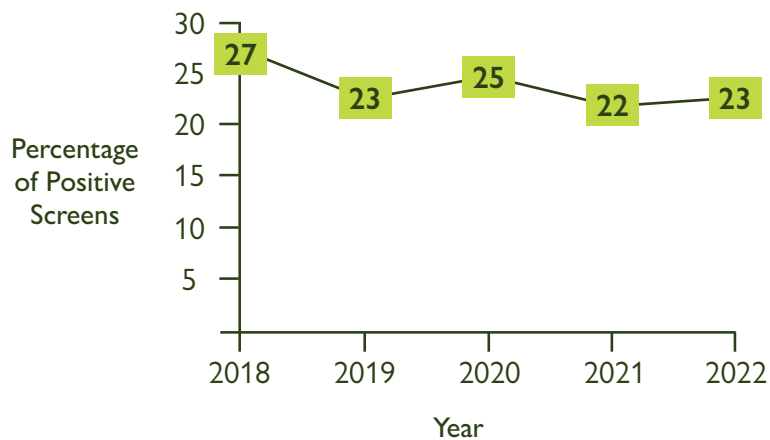


How successful was Gwaredu BVD Youngstock Screening?

Through screening 9,369 farms, Gwaredu BVD identified that 27% of farms screened BVD positive in 2018. In 2022, this reduced to 23%, meaning 77% of farms are now BVD free.



Percentage of Welsh farms screening antibody positive annually



How did Gwaredu BVD reward farms free from BVD?

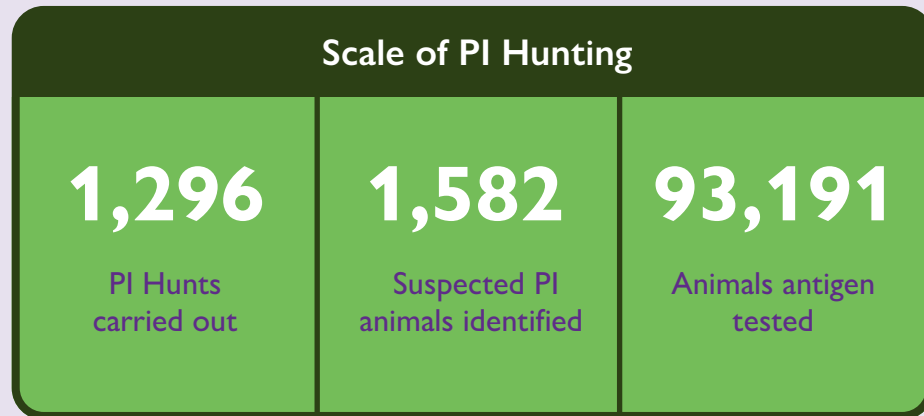
Gwaredu BVD introduced BVD Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates to allow farmers to share their BVD status when selling stock, to promote informed purchasing.



Between 2017 - 2022,
19,282 Gwaredu BVD certificates
were issued to farmers
across Wales.

How did Gwaredu BVD support positive farms?

All farms who received antibody positive results as part of their Youngstock Screen were entitled to additional Gwaredu BVD funding towards a PI Hunt, supporting them to identify any PI animals on their holding.



PI animals are responsible for shedding and spreading the virus throughout Wales and across the border. PI animals cannot be treated or cured, they must be isolated and culled.



A vet's view: Philip Thomas, Ystwyth Vets

"BVD was introduced into a rapidly expanding herd that had bought stock in from several sources. On the first screening we found lots of antibody positive animals and subsequently found 5 PIs. It took a while to convince the farmer to isolate and euthanase what appeared to be healthy calves, but when some of them started to deteriorate they were all eventually euthanased. Testing of the subsequent crop we found 2 more PIs, but following this, we have had two years with clear screens. In these subsequent years there have been fewer abortions, less use of antibiotics and fewer calves needing drips. The annual screening of this herd has enabled the farmer to eliminate BVD.

In other herds where we have had clear screens for years, a positive screen rang alarm bells. Subsequent screening and questioning revealed biosecurity breaches, in one case neighbouring cattle had broken in and brought disease in. In another, a calf was bought to replace a calf lost at calving. Due to the annual screening these incidents were found quickly. This resulted in only one PI being found on each of these farms.

The scheme has highlighted to us how relatively minor biosecurity breaches can result in long lasting damage.

No one is safe from the threat of BVD until all farms are clear of BVD."



Who did Gwaredu BVD work with?

Steering Group

The Gwaredu BVD Steering Group was made up of Coleg Sir Gar, RVC, NFU, FUW, Iechyd Da, Milfeddygion Gogledd Cymru, SRUC, Farming Connect, AHDB, HCC and BVA.

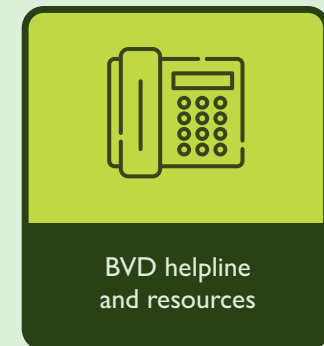
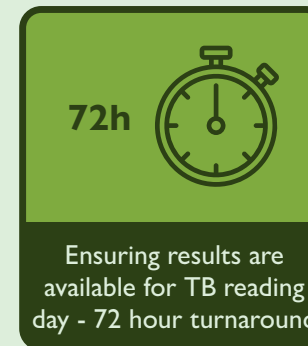
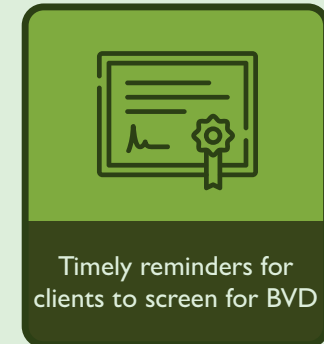
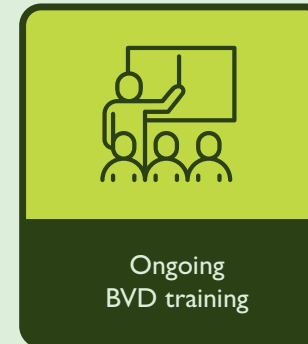
Essential in achieving a Wales-wide participation, all of the above partners actively supported the concept of BVD eradication in Wales. The success outlined by this programme proves the importance of collaborative working.



Veterinary Practices

Key to the success of the Gwaredu BVD programme has been the participation of all large animal vet practices across Wales. This has been achieved through two delivery partners - Iechyd Da and Milfeddygion Gogledd Cymru.

Gwaredu BVD supported vets across Wales with:



Other stakeholders

Gwaredu BVD actively engaged with many industry stakeholders, such as cattle markets, Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, Wales Federation of Young Farmers Clubs as well other BVD eradication programmes in place throughout the British Isles to improve awareness and participation in the programme.

How did Gwaredu BVD achieve its objective of increasing BVD awareness within the industry?

During the voluntary phase of Gwaredu BVD, active industry collaboration was coupled with an engaging marketing and education campaign. This ensured Wales-wide participation and a greater understanding among cattle farmers of BVD control on their farms.

We used a variety of marketing materials such as clipboards, booklets, bodywarmers and mugs to increase awareness of BVD within the industry, as illustrated below:



Did Gwaredu BVD encourage industry behaviour change?

Five years of repetitive and continuous support encouraging the industry to screen for BVD has resulted in the following behaviour changes:

- The routine of annually screening for BVD during the annual bTB test to check the herd for BVD freedom.
- Increased prioritisation of BVD eradication by vets and farmers.
- Increased awareness of the BVD disease and the focussing on only purchasing animals from known BVD free herds.
- Farmers sharing their BVD free status when selling stock.
- Recognition by the RWAS of the importance of BVD control and the introduction of new cattle entry requirements.



What is the Next Phase of BVD Eradication in Wales?

As a result of the momentum generated by the Gwaredu BVD programme and the ambition of the industry steering group, the Welsh Government recognised the need to retain the gains made during the voluntary phase and launched a public consultation in the summer of 2022 to gauge the wider industry's views for the introduction of legislation to support BVD eradication.

In December 2022, the Welsh Government published the consultation summary of responses and their response to the summary of responses.

On 31 January 2023 the Minister, Lesley Griffiths announced in the Senedd that she is working towards "bringing legislation forward in the next financial year".

Extract of the Minister's statement:
"The Gwaredu BVD programme is an excellent example of what can be achieved through such successful collaboration."

“
Over 81% of respondents agreed that legislation requiring mandatory BVD screening was necessary to achieve BVD freedom in Wales.
”

(Welsh Government, Summary of Responses, p.6)



Lesley Griffiths,
Minister for Rural Affairs,
North Wales and Trefnydd.

As we enter the transition phase and prepare for future legislation, it is vital keepers continue testing their herds for BVD and remove persistently infected animals as soon as feasibly possible.

The intention for a future scheme remains to provide a set of requirements to allow keepers to remove BVD from their herds and to keep it out through good biosecurity.

Compulsory requirements would ensure the principles of BVD eradication are observed and the national herd can benefit from the long term results of BVD freedom.

We will continue to build on the progress and successes of the voluntary phase of the scheme and as we progress to its next phase, I would like to thank the cattle industry, delivery partners and keepers across Wales for their vigilance and efforts to date towards eradicating BVD."



Thank you

from the Gwaredu BVD team



John Griffiths,
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“Together, we have demonstrated the benefits of an industry-led programme and the positive impact screening for BVD has - not just on individual herds, but also for brand Wales as we work to improve our reputation and support the global trading of Welsh farming.

85% of farms in Wales have participated in the Gwaredu BVD programme and that is a testament to the effort and teamwork the whole industry has committed to BVD eradication. Such high engagement rates would not have been possible without Welsh Government funding and the support of the Gwaredu BVD Steering Group and Delivery Partners.

I'd like to thank everyone who has worked on and participated in the Gwaredu BVD voluntary funded phase. Lets retain these gains made and all continue to work towards a cattle industry in Wales free from BVD.”