

Welcome to our first issue of Herdsure® News for veterinary practices registered with the service.

Since its launch at the 2009 BCVA Congress, the Herdsure® Cattle Health Improvement Service has grown steadily and is now testing beef and dairy herds across the country.

Many veterinary practices have expressed an interest in the service and already 165 registered practices are offering Herdsure® to their clients.

More than 10,000 beef and 9,000 dairy cows are now being tested using Herdsure® protocols. We expect this number to increase significantly over the coming months as a number of regional projects are included in the service and it gathers momentum.

Second phase of protocols launched

The launch of the second phase means that six of the major diseases affecting profitability in cattle herds are now addressed by the Herdsure® Cattle Health Improvement Service.

The service now includes sampling, testing and management protocols for infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) leptospirosis, and neosporosis in addition to bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), Johne's disease and liver fluke.

We are sending updated handbooks to vets and farmers who have enrolled herds. Please let us know if you have not received yours.

Tackling cattle abortion

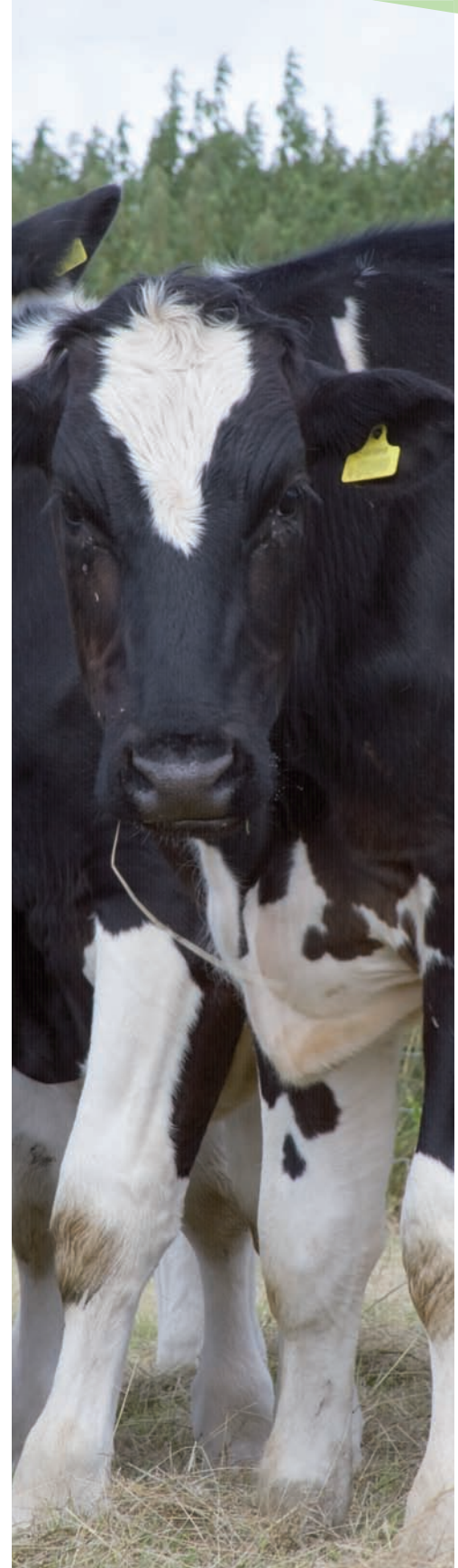
The second phase of disease protocols includes a protocol for the control of neosporosis in dairy and beef herds. This is the first commercially available strategy for this major cause of abortion in cattle in the UK.

The protocol uses the ELISA test for detecting antibodies in blood samples. Once an animal is confirmed as positive it is important that its progeny are not used for breeding.

Due to the way the disease causes the animal's immune system to respond, samples must be collected from the cattle when they are less than two weeks old, or later in life during a specific period of pregnancy. Two negative tests are needed to be confident that an animal is free of infection.

Clearly all this makes the management of the herd, embarking on neosporosis control, an administrative challenge. We have therefore adapted the inhouse Herdsure® Management System to keep a record of all test results. By doing this we can update the testing history of all the cattle in the herd on a regular basis with those still needing to be sampled as well as the positive ones.

There's been a lot of early interest in this protocol with seven farms currently signed up to start testing.



Nick Blayney of Arden Forest Veterinary Group – Warwickshire talks about his experience of using Herdsure®

When/where did you first hear about Herdsure®?

VLA colleagues had been telling me about this initiative when we discussed working together with some clients. It seemed just what we were after so we soon registered our interested clients when it was launched

Why did you opt for Herdsure®?

We have always worked closely with VLA and have great confidence in their services. We were delighted when we had the opportunity to extend this co-operation into a more formal herd health planning structure.

What type of practice do you have?

Ours is a mixed practice with a very mixed farming arm. We have clients in all spheres and many different sizes of farming enterprise. We are a relatively small farm practice but one that is trying to maintain high standards of clinical practice for our more forward-looking clients.

How many of your clients are currently using Herdsure®?

We have five holdings using the service at the moment, mainly testing for BVD and/or Johne's disease. Unfortunately some clients cannot yet see the service as part of their long term strategy so more education is to be done.

How many beef/ dairy are testing and what diseases are they testing for?

The launch of Herdsure® coincided with the West Midlands Herd Health Planning Initiative which was very fortunate for both sides as it provided a vehicle for us to introduce Herdsure® to our clients. We have some clients using the service who do not receive any grant-aided herd health planning

What feedback have you had from clients?

Our clients are positive about the whole herd health planning concept and accept our advice about Herdsure® being a useful platform to use.



Photo courtesy of BVA



Herdsure® helps practitioners to manage health screening audits and provide cost effective services to their clients

What do you think are the strengths of the service?

In general the arrival of Herdsure® on the scene has been a welcome response to a move towards a more holistic approach to herd health planning, something that vets have been trying to promote for years. It needs a solid platform of data, which Herdsure® provides.

Vets have to both manage health screening audits and try to provide cost effective advice to their clients. The Herdsure® health monitoring and control strategies provide vets with a structure upon which to base their advice.

We are now able to offer a product of high scientific quality in partnership with an organisation which has a history of working with the profession

and with which we enjoy a close and efficient working relationship.

The disease control and monitoring strategies are soundly science-based, developed by acknowledged experts in VLA and from practice. By offering these to our clients we can have confidence in reputation of the scheme both now and in the future.

Supporting you to deliver successful health planning

Colleagues at VLA Luddington, the 'hub' of Herdsure®, have been working hard to ensure that the service works smoothly for you.

Our vets, laboratory staff, customer services and sales support staff are all involved in delivering an efficient service.

Alison Tomlin who manages incoming samples explains: "We aim to deliver high quality and prompt results. To help us to achieve this, please follow the sampling guidelines in your handbook."

How we can help you market Herdsure®

- Speaking at farmer meetings.
- Farmer information sheets (on the website or request from the helpline).
- Posters for your surgery.
- Logo on your websites with a link to the Herdsure® website.
- Case studies we can publish on the Herdsure® website or in farmer information sheets.
- Look out for articles in the veterinary and farming press.

We have been busy attending farmer meetings in Herefordshire, Wiltshire, Wales and Somerset! Remember to contact us if you would like someone to help you promote Herdsure® to your clients in this way. We have also held a number of Herdsure® road shows at our regional laboratories.

Help us to help you

- ✓ Please **do not sample until you receive the submission** forms with the instructions on which animals to test - otherwise you may have to repeat the tests.
- ✓ **If in doubt about the testing, please call us** - it's better to be safe than sorry!
- ✓ **Please use the correct test tube.** For example, green top heparin for BVD and red top for Johne's disease.
- ✓ **Ensure that each blood sample is traceable to an individual animal** otherwise results will be delayed for your clients.
- ✓ Remember that **VLA supply containers for individual bulk milk** and faeces while you need to supply containers for individual milk samples and blood samples. In every case you can use the postage-paid labels.

Here to help you

- ★ We have consultants based across our regional network of laboratories who will be happy to provide advice on Herdsure® enrolled herds. Simply phone the Herdsure® helpline.
- ★ Don't forget to check out the Herdsure® pages at www.vlascientific.com. You can download forms for enrolling your clients and keep up-to-date with developments and events we are running or attending.
- ★ To arrange help with promoting the service to your clients, contact Alison Braddock, Business Development Manager, on **07824895105**.
- ★ For all general or sales enquiries, please ring the Herdsure® helpline on **01789 750972**, or email Herdsure.LSLuddington@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk

Come along and meet us at the Dairy Event & Livestock Show, Birmingham NEC, on 7 and 8 September 2010 - enter our prize draw to win a fabulous food hamper!