



Infectious diseases continue to be one of the biggest threats to animal health, welfare and farm productivity. Disease outbreaks cause both clinical illness and subclinical disease, leading to reduced growth rates, immunosuppression, poorer fertility, lower milk yields and hence significant economic losses. They also drive increased antibiotic usage on farms.

Effective vaccination protocols are therefore vital as we work towards lower disease levels, improved welfare and reduced reliance on antibiotics.

In the UK, uptake of cattle vaccination continues to rise. The total number of cattle vaccine doses sold increased by 24% between 2011 and 2024, with approximately 10.5 million doses sold in 2024, highlighting a growing focus on prevention rather than cure. The total number of doses of cattle vaccines sold increased by 24% between 2011 and 2024. In total, 10.5 million doses were sold in 2024.

Table 1. Estimated uptake of vaccination (%) for cattle in the UK between 2018–2024

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number cattle <1 year	2,888,432	2,858,673	2,900,057	2,969,413	2,961,578	2,879,880	2,821,896
Calf pneumonia vaccines (%)	40	39	44	44	43	45	48
Total cattle and calves	9,750,599	9,598,732	9,490,300	9,522,442	9,524,864	9,399,840	9,282,240
IBR vaccines (%)	26	26	30	29	31	31	32
Total number of breeding females >1 year	4,846,743	4,788,210	4,749,092	4,765,815	4,769,069	4,715,887	4,645,315
BVD vaccines (%)	42	43	44	41	40	39	34
Leptospirosis vaccines (%)	31	32	32	30	30	33	33
Total number of breeding females >2 years	3,411,519	3,367,844	3,333,094	3,315,653	3,274,535	3,208,652	3,159,094
Calf enteritis vaccines (%)	19	18	19	21	22	24	27
Total doses of vaccine sold	9,838,655	9,751,615	10,499,505	10,183,230	10,341,390	10,501,970	10,491,235

How vaccines work

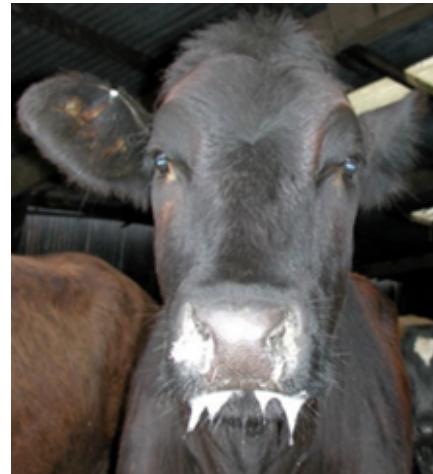
Vaccines stimulate the immune system to recognise and respond to specific diseases without causing infection. If vaccinated animals are later exposed, their immune response is faster and more effective, either preventing disease altogether or significantly reducing its severity and spread. At herd level, vaccination helps protect naïve animals and supports long-term disease control, with eradication often the ultimate goal.

Outlined below are a few of the most common diseases that herds are vaccinated for in the UK.

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR)

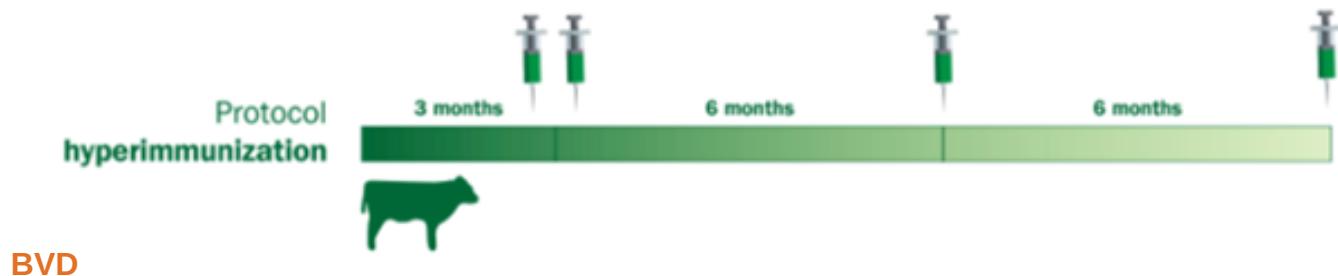
IBR causes severe respiratory disease. While mortality is usually low, the subclinical disease burden is significant, leading to reduced performance and economic losses. Recovered animals become lifelong carriers and can continue to spread infection within the herd.

IBR has shown the largest increase in vaccine uptake, rising by 88% between 2011 and 2024.



Gold Standard IBR vaccination protocol-

- HipraBovis IBR marker Live
- Calves from 3 months of age
- Primary course: 2x intramuscular injections, 21 days apart
- Booster 6 monthly thereafter
- All new animals vaccinated prior to entry to the herd.



BVD is a highly contagious viral disease. Adult cattle may show few or no clinical signs, but infection during pregnancy can lead to abortion or the birth of persistently infected (PI) calves. PI animals shed very high levels of virus, driving immunosuppression, reproductive losses, reduced growth rates and increased culling within the herd.

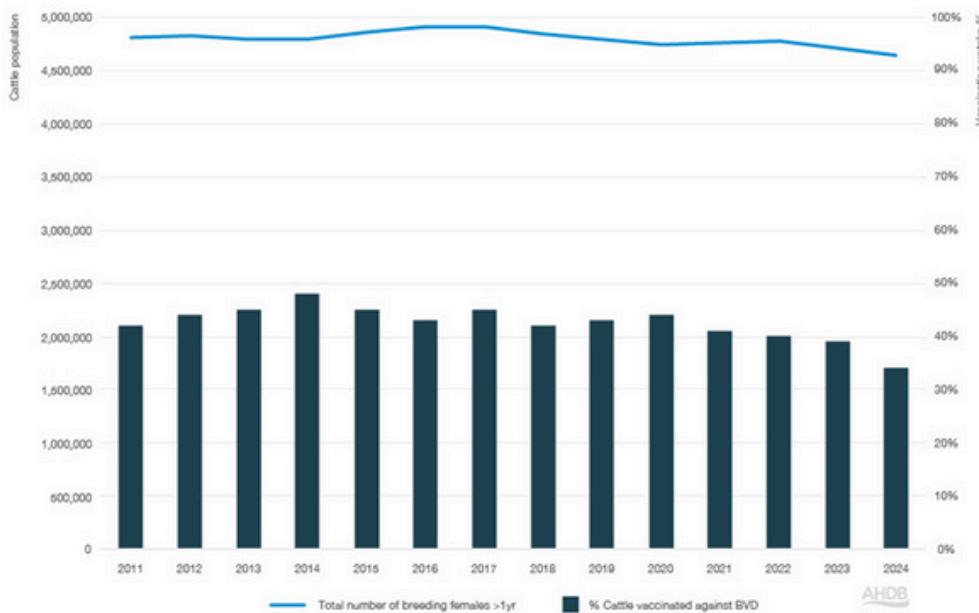
As a result, BVD can cause substantial economic losses even in the absence of obvious clinical disease. This is one of the most costly endemic diseases in UK dairy herds.

Gold standard BVD vaccination protocol-

- Calves from 3 months of age
- Primary course: 1x intramuscular injection
- Booster yearly

Bovela provides proven foetal protection against BVD virus types 1 and 2, with onset of immunity three weeks after primary vaccination.

The table opposite shows the % of cattle vaccinated against BVD in the UK.



Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that commonly causes abortions, infertility, reduced milk yield and poor reproductive performance. Lepto is also a zoonotic disease, posing a health risk to farmers and vets. Infected cattle may show minimal clinical signs while continuing to shed bacteria in their urine, contaminating the environment and maintaining infection within the herd.

Vaccination plays a key role in protecting fertility, maintaining productivity and reducing the zoonotic risk.

Gold standard Lepto control

- Spirovac
- Calves as young as 4 weeks of age
- Primary course: 2x subcutaneous injections, 4-6 weeks apart
- Booster yearly

Clostridial disease

Clostridia is one of the most common causes for sudden death in beef cattle. Clostridial organisms live in organic material and can rapidly produce fatal toxins following tissue damage.

Gold standard Clostridia control

- Covexin 10
- Calves as young as 2 weeks of age
- Primary course: 2x subcutaneous injections, 4–6 weeks apart
- Booster every 6–12 months (For calf protection, booster cows 2–8 weeks before calving)

Vaccination is not always the solution but it is the cornerstone of preventive herd health planning. The practicalities, such as timing, vaccine storage and administration, are all essential to achieve the best results.

If you would like help reviewing or updating your herd vaccination plan, please contact us and we will be happy to help!

“Hello and Goodbye!”

Vet Tech update

We welcome Kate Selman to the Vet Tech team, she looks forward to meeting you all over the coming months.....

and we say farewell to **Zoe Korner and Ellie Welch** and wish them both all the best for the future.



**All the best ,
Jess**