



DHI Introduces BVD Milk Test

(Guelph, ON – December 1st, 2011) CanWest DHI is pleased to announce the introduction of a Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) milk based testing service. Building on the success of its Johne's, Leukosis and Mastitis 3 tests, BVD testing will be another optional service available to dairy producers.

BVD is a viral infection in cattle, which has a negative impact on herd performance and can result in significant economic losses. Common signs of infection include respiratory problems, infertility and abortion which eventually lead to reduced milk production and early culling.

The DHI testing service is designed to identify Persistently Infected (PI) animals. PI animals are infected for life and constantly shed the BVD virus. The normal course of action is immediate culling. PI animals are generated by infection of unborn calves in early gestation, when the dam herself is exposed to the BVD virus. Due to their compromised immune system, the majority of PI calves will not survive to become part of the breeding age heifers or adult milking herd, but the ones that do, will be a source of BVD virus in the herd and a main cause of infections and herd performance problems.

By far, a good vaccination program combined with sound biosecurity measures are the best defense against BVD. However, early detection and elimination of PI animals also plays a role as vaccination alone won't fully protect the herd if PI animals are present.

A key feature of this new service is that the test can be performed using the same milk samples currently collected by DHI. In addition, the ability to screen a group of cows (up to 250 in a group) and, in the case of positive screening results, the ability to immediately test individual cows without having to do further sampling at the farm makes the service very convenient and cost effective. Almost always, the recommended first step will be to screen the herd and then do some cow testing if needed. The group screening test is based on sensitive PCR technology, while the cow test is an ELISA based antigen test which is affordable and reliable at the cow level.

DHI believes that the convenience and the cost effectiveness of this new service will make it highly popular. According to Richard Cantin, Director of Customer Service for DHI, "for herds on DHI, sample collection is already done. The fact that we can screen the milking herd and then if needed quickly zero in on individual cows, all without doing further sampling, makes it incredibly convenient."

Producers will have the ability to screen the milking herd or test individual cows. In most cases, screening the herd will be the recommended first step. “The testing choices are very flexible and it will be up to each producer and their veterinarian to decide which testing options will best meet their needs,” said Cantin. He adds “The likelihood of a PI cow in the milking herd is actually low, but the impact can be significant. We think the ability to regularly screen the milking herd in a cost effective manner, with samples that are already collected makes this service a perfect fit for routine BVD surveillance.”

Due to initial lab capacity limitations, the new BVD service will be made available gradually by regions and to all CanWest customers as soon as possible. For more information and test availability in your area, contact your local DHI field service representative or call DHI at 1-800-549-4373.

DHI recommends that herd owners work closely with their veterinarian to design BVD best management practices, determine a testing plan for the herd, test results’ interpretation and action plan for test positive cows.

CanWest DHI is a non-profit milk recording organization, providing profitable dairy management solutions to dairy producers across Ontario and Western Canada.

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Sensitive PCR test allows up to 250 cows in a single pooled sample for PI cow screening.