

Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis

- IBR

IBR is a viral disease, caused by an infection with **Bovine Herpesvirus Type I**.

It represents a very common and often underlying and unrecognised disease in New Zealand cattle.

An infection with this virus can lead to lesions in both the respiratory tract (mouth, throat, trachea, lungs), causing a combination of nasal inflammation (rhinitis) and tracheitis, and the reproductive tract of the animals. Most importantly, once an animal becomes infected, it will remain a carrier of the disease for life, can shed the virus intermittently and infect other animals in the herd.

Even after an infection has been overcome, the virus can remain inactive in the body and can be reactivated under certain circumstances, like any stress to the animal. In this case, there is a renewed, high risk of transmission.

How do animals become infected?

IBR represents an underlying disease that many New Zealand dairy farms suffer from without being aware of it.

Healthy animals can become infected by newly purchased animals - when these appear to be healthy but carry the virus inactively.

The probability of reactivating the virus and the disease increases for example in stress situations like calving, transport, housing of many animals of different origin in a confined space or parasite infestation.

The risk of infection is the same for all animals, with no regards to their age.

An Infection with IBR takes place via droplet infection. The virus multiplies within the upper respiratory

tract and is shedded, two to three weeks after infection, by coughing, sneezing, saliva or nasal excretions, as well as with tears.

What are the clinical signs?

IBR causes several different clinical signs like fever, performance depression, loss of appetite, nasal and ocular discharge, tracheal inflammation, coughing and apathy.

Reproductive symptoms include fertility problems, miscarriages or birth defects.

Generally, a decrease in milk production may indicate an early phase of BHV-1 infection.

How is the infection diagnosed?

Since the clinical signs are versatile and often unspecific, it is recommended to report any suspicion to your Vet and to consider laboratory testing.

What is the treatment for IBR?

If IBR is a problem in your herd, it is important to prevent the infection from spreading to other animals or animal herds as well as possible.

Antibiotics are only useful to prevent and treat secondary bacterial infections. Anti-inflammatories should be avoided as they may reactivate inactive herpes viruses.



FACT SHEET

How can I prevent my animals from infection with IBR?

If possible, only buy animals from IBR-free herds. Improving husbandry conditions can also help to prevent stressful situations and the reactivation of any inactive viruses that may be present.

Since IBR is endemic in New Zealand, the best way to protect your animals from an infection is by vaccination.

