NADIS – Reporting Vets’ Responses – August 2008

Question:  Have you noticed an increase in abortion rates following Bluetongue vaccination?

**Vet 72:** We see occasional abortions after handling for blood sampling, TB and vaccination procedures without any Blue Tongue vaccinations.

**Vet 12:** They are not in a Blue Tongue vaccination area yet so they can’t really comment. This would be very bad news though if this is being found. Interested to know if anything transpires from this though.

**Vet 09:** Has heard rumours of problems through markets etc. but as yet none of his clients have reported anything suspicious and none of their bureau data recorded clients have shown increased abortion rates following Blue Tongue vaccination.

**Vet 37:** He has heard farmers talking about this. He maybe puts it down to being stress induced following handling to Blue Tongue vaccinate.

**Vet 39:** They have just been moved into the protection zone recently and so have sold their first few batches of the vaccine. Is very concerned about these rumors of abortion and would like to hear more details. He has been telling his farmers that the disease is worse than the cure but is very worried about this.

**Vet 13:** Only just had the Blue Tongue vaccine. He has herd lots of rumors going around that it is causing abortion in cattle. One of their farms has contact with someone from Norfolk who’s had 6 abortions apparently. He imagines that if this is the case they could well have been zero positive animals. In Shropshire its very unlikely that there are many zero positive animals. Its casing a lot of problems as those people that have ordered the vaccine are now not going to use it on dairy cattle in particular that are pregnant, this means most of them. It’s going to be difficult to achieve anything like the vaccination levels that are needed.

**Vet 86:** Practice has had an increase in the number of abortions recently but this was prior to Blue Tongue vaccination. Has heard all the rumours but have only had one client who had a milk drop problem after Blue Tongue vaccination and have not had any other problems.

**Vet 79:** His practice has only just come into the protection zone and so it is too early to be able to report on potential effects. Many of his farmers are aware of the rumours circulating about the vaccines effects but he has no evidence as yet.

**Vet 17:** His practice is in an area not using the vaccine and so he can’t comment.

**Vet 85:** Practice has bought 40,000 doses of Blue Tongue vaccine and has had not any abortion problems to date. They have had a few skin reactions and a few milk drops (probably due more to stress than the vaccine itself) but this has been all.
Vet 81: His Northumberland practice is not yet able to Blue Tongue vaccinate and so can’t comment. Intervet say they have no reports of more abortions with Blue Tongue than with any other vaccine and have investigated several possible abortion problems but have not confirmed a link. Could it be due to the 2 sessions of additional stress for the cows? Farmers in his area are aware of the rumours and have heard that in Oxfordshire 6 out of 20 heifers aborted but vet does not know if this is true or not. The practice should be able to start vaccinating in a few weeks but vet feels farmers enthusiasm for it is waning by the day and the rumours don’t help – vet would be surprised if uptake exceeds 50%.

Vet 32: Has not noticed an increase in abortions but has heard the rumours. Vet believes any abortions would not be due to the vaccine itself but to the stress of handling and could occur following any handling – for example after TB testing or Lepto/BVD vaccination. Vet has found explaining this to clients has reassured them about using the Blue Tongue vaccine.

Vet 30: Vet thinks this is a statistical issue – some cows will happen to abort after vaccination in the same way that 50% dogs will be ill in the 6 months following their annual vaccination (this should not be a surprise). Vet has 2 cows and one aborted after Blue Tongue vaccination (a 50% abortion rate!) calf was sent to VLA and had hydrocephalis linked to a recessive gene carried by the bull – nothing to do with vaccination. One client had 3 abortions in the weeks following Blue Tongue vaccination but is known to have active BVD and Lepto which are more likely causes and for which the herd was not vaccinated. Vet thinks that if a cow is due to abort then vaccination may be the final straw – either the act of vaccinating or the contents of the vaccine may be the trigger – as was the case with his own cow.

Vet 31: This practice has just started sending out some 60,000 vaccines. They have herd some of the possible problems associated with abortion but are still advising their farmers to start using the vaccine. They have advised their farmers to look out for side effects.

Vet 03: They are not vaccinating in Scotland so has no comment at this point.

Vet 29: Has had a few people reporting on increases of abortion, some reporting drops in milk yield but majority report nothing. He says that just handling the animal’s results in getting a few things like this. One 500 cow dairy unit found 2 days after vaccination 2 cows had aborted. The farmer did at least have the good nature to call about 2 hours later to say that one of these cows had not been vaccinated. This shows that they need to be a bit careful before putting it down to the vaccination.

Vet 10: They do have to get their farmers to sign a disclaimer form if they are using the vaccine in pregnant cows and sheep. They don’t have a lot of cows were they are but they have used a lot of Blue Tongue vaccine in the last month of so and they haven’t had a lot of reports of adverse reactions. Obviously the sheep aren’t pregnant at the moment anyway so there are no issue with them. No reports back from their suckler farmers of abortions but they do understand that there is a risk of it.