

In the light of recent events the Department has reviewed its policy concerning Porcine Reproductive & Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS, blue-ear). Changes have been made to the availability of vaccines for the disease and the protocols for the de-restriction of herds that no longer have clinical signs. The current policy is outlined below.

Notifiable

- PRRS remains notifiable. All private veterinary practitioners (PVPs), herd-owners, laboratories etc have a legal obligation to report suspicion of an outbreak of PRRS to the Department.

Restrictions

- The Department will be restricting herds only where there are clinical signs of PRRS (or have been in the recent past). This restriction will last for 6 months after all clinical signs of PRRS have ended.
 - This restriction means that movements of pigs, slurry and carcasses are all done under licence.
 - Pigs from these herds may not be exported to other countries. **This includes pigs for slaughter to Northern Ireland.**

De-restriction

- Herds can be derestricted if they supply a certificate to their DVO from their PVP stating that there have been no signs of PRRS for the previous 6 months. **While previously herds had to submit blood samples to be de-restricted this condition no longer applies.**

Vaccination

- Both the live and dead vaccines are available to herds following application by their PVP to the Medicines Section. Previously, the live vaccine was limited in use to restricted herds but this condition no longer applies. **The PVP can use whichever vaccine they feel is appropriate and no restrictions need apply.** Vaccination is not compulsory and is up to the herdowner and their PVP to decide the appropriate treatment.

Restricted List

- Herds that are restricted are placed on a list maintained centrally by the Department. Currently, there are approximately 40 herds on this list. This list is used to satisfy specific health conditions for exports of live pigs and pigmeat. It is essential that all clinical cases of PRRS are reported to the Department immediately.

Recent Developments

- An increased number of herds have tested for PRRS in the last few weeks.
- Almost 25% of the herds tested have been sero-positive but only a few of these herds have had a clinical sign.
- The Department is monitoring the situation closely and will continue to review its policy as the situation unfolds.