Getting on with the job of eradicating BVD

THE BCVA PRESIDENT, ANDREW COBNER, had just completed a five-hour cycle ride with the Falmouth Wheelers when we sat down at 4pm to talk about various issues.

Andrew explained that he uses some 500 calories per hour on the bike and needed to refuel with fish pie, scones, jam, cream and coffee in the Pandora Inn at Restronguet Creek, Cornwall.

Before becoming president, he had not been on a bike since he was a teenager and soon he will be travelling from Land’s End to John O’Groats in 15 days, thus the training, donning of lyca and support from the Wheelers.

“Learning to ride a bike is the first step, to ride as a pack without endangering yourself, or others, is a further skill. The project for the BCVA, in its 50th year, is to raise £50,000 for the charity Send A Car. The initial group sets off on 7th May. Past presidents are joining in, some for the whole trip, some for one leg and some offering other support.

One or two are said to be cleaning off the rust from their bikes, unused for years, in order to cover a few miles until wind and limb call enough. There seems to be considerable emphasis on coffee and cake as practices will be visited along the route for refreshment stops.

The organisation is well in hand, and the route is planned and everyone is invited to participate. Veterinary practices are requested to arrange an event to contribute £500. Rugby shirts from the Six Nations are being sought and together with a Lions shirt, to be offered at the spring sales, buyers can check the BVD status of a herd by mobile phone before bidding and the impact of this on prices will be carefully monitored.

Would a scheme to compensate farmers for slaughtering a PI be viable? Would it be better to encourage: testing? Without a pot of vaccine in the UK and currently the virus is warming.

Weak facilities

As vets are moving from farm to farm, they pick up a multitude of situations where it is clear that weak facilities are contributing to poor performance. For farmers to tap into that hidden expertise would be a major step forward in disease reduction.

Riding the bike is one aspect; learning to ride as a pack without endangering yourself, or others, is a further skill. Learning to ride a bike is one aspect; learning to ride as a pack without endangering yourself, or others, is a further skill.

The BCVA bike ride itinerary

- 7th May Lands End to Lanivet 65 miles
- 8th May Lanivet to Zeal Monachorum 80 miles
- 9th May Zeal Monachorum to Langford 65 miles
- 10th May Langford to Quedegeley 65 miles
- 11th May Quedegeley to Bridgnorth 67 miles
- 12th May Bridgnorth to Weaversham 63 miles
- 13th May Weaversham to Lancaster 70 miles
- 14th May Lancaster to Carlisle 73 miles
- 15th May Carlisle to Lanark 78 miles
- 16th May Lanark to Perth 67 miles
- 17th May Perth to Avice 82 miles
- 18th May Avice to Tain 67 miles
- 19th May Tain to Armadale 82 miles
- 20th May Armadale to John O’Groats 56 miles

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been recorded where planned breeding has coincided with a high virus hit from midges. Generally, the disease is considered as endemic but of low impact. The virus crosses the placenta in sheep but probably, due to a longer gestation length, a better opportunity to build up immunity and a usual single occupancy uterus, is not such a problem in cattle. The dangers arise as immune animals are slaughtered, leaving a herd or flock of naïve animals. There is no direct virus transfer from animal to animal, apart from dam to foetus. Virus transfer is via the midge. It had been thought that this was a new virus, but further work indicated that it is a very old virus that has moved up with animals from Africa. An issue of globalisation rather than global warming.

There has been a very low uptake of vaccine in the UK and currently it appears none is available, although production could commence if there was future demand. The results of the BCVA survey should be available in time to consider the risks for clients in 2017.