

19th February 2025

Blue Tongue Update

Dear All,

I'm sure you have all seen in the recent farming press and social media that the Bluetongue restricted zone is advancing westwards (currently the border is just east of Ottery – [an interactive up to date map can be found here](#))

This has two implications for us, we need to be prepared for the changes in movement rules should our area be placed under restriction, and to understand and prepare for the risk of bluetongue infection in our herds and flocks, especially as the weather warms up and midge activity starts.

Animal Movements

- Currently we are outside of the restricted area so movements can proceed as normal
- Should we enter the restricted zone then you will need a license to move animals.
- If your farm is not under specific restrictions, then there is a general license for movement to slaughter or slaughter markets
- If your farm should be placed under restriction, or the animals are not moving direct to slaughter, you will need to apply for a specific license
- If the animals may leave the restricted zone you will need to request pre-movement blood testing (which we will do, and APHA funded via XLFarmcare, [further information can be found here](#)).

[Information on licenses can be found here](#) and it is important to check prior to movement as this could be updated after the date of this letter.

Vaccination

There are vaccines available for BTV-3, the strain currently in the UK, and they are proven to reduce the level of disease, and it's spread, although not to completely prevent it. We can source the vaccine for you should you chose to vaccinate.

- Risk of disease entry is high where there is a high concentration of ruminants around your farm, and where midges are present
- As animals in our area will have no immunity to bluetongue, the consequences of disease entry into a herd or flock are also very high (50% mortality in sheep flocks and threefold increase in youngstock mortality in beef herds have been reported)
- The vaccine can be given from one month of age in the absence of maternal antibodies, or delayed to 3 months where dams have been vaccinated

Mill House, Station Road, Bovey Tracey Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 9AL • Tel/Fax 01626 833023
31 Court Street, Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot Devon, TQ13 8LG • Tel 01647 440441
Old Mines Road, Christow, Exeter, Devon • Tel/Fax 01626 833023
e-mail: admin@moorgatevets.co.uk

Mr A Rubens BVetMed MRCVS

MVG Devon LTD • T/A Moorgate Veterinary Group

Registered in England No: 5912517

Registered Office: 31 Court Street, Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 8LG



- Sheep require a single dose under the skin
- Cattle have 2 doses, 3 weeks apart in the muscle
- The need to revaccinate has not yet been established
- The vaccine is licensed during pregnancy, but you should avoid early or late pregnancy.
- The vaccine comes in 50 dose bottles and availability is currently good
- It is possible to reduce the risk of bluetongue without vaccination
 - Always ensuring good ventilation and airflow to reduce midge presence in buildings
 - Avoiding areas of the farm with high midge populations if possible
 - Avoid sourcing animals from the restricted zone if possible, and comply with post movement testing requirements if necessary
 - Currently fly treatments are not recommended as their effectiveness against midges is unknown

How to spot Bluetongue

So far, most cases have been detected by surveillance testing, but the graphic below shows the clinical signs you might see during an outbreak, and suspicion of bluetongue, or concern for your animals should be reported to us immediately.

It is possible to [sign up for government disease alerts](#) if you wish.

Mill House, Station Road, Bovey Tracey Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 9AL • Tel/Fax 01626 833023
31 Court Street, Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot Devon, TQ13 8LG • Tel 01647 440441
Old Mines Road, Christow, Exeter, Devon • Tel/Fax 01626 833023
e-mail: admin@moorgatevets.co.uk

Mr A Rubens BVetMed MRCVS

MVG Devon LTD • T/A Moorgate Veterinary Group

Registered in England No: 5912517

Registered Office: 31 Court Street, Moretonhampstead, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 8LG

Clinical signs of bluetongue

Sheep

Sheep are more likely to show obvious clinical signs of bluetongue, these include:

- Ulcers or sores in the mouth and nose
- Discharge from the eyes or nose and drooling from the mouth
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, head and neck and the coronary band (where the skin of the leg meets the horn of the foot)
- Other clinical signs:
 - Red skin as a result of blood collecting beneath the surface
 - Fever
 - Lameness
 - Breathing problems
 - Abortion
 - Death

Cattle

Signs of the disease include:

- Lethargy
- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and muzzle
- Redness of the mouth, eyes and nose
- Reddening of the skin above the hoof
- Nasal discharge
- Reddening and erosions on the teats
- Fever
- Milk drop
- Not eating
- Abortion

Adult cattle may serve as a source of virus for several weeks while displaying little or no clinical signs of disease and are often the preferred host for insect vectors.

Calves

Calves can become infected with bluetongue before birth if the mother is infected while pregnant.

Signs of infection include:

- Calves born small, weak, deformed or blind
- Death of calves within a few days of birth
- Abortions

Livestock keepers and vets should consider bluetongue as a possible cause for calves showing these signs.

Pictures of sheep with bluetongue



This sheep has a high temperature, reddening of the mouth and lining of the nose. The lips, tongue and face are swollen



Foot of a lame sheep with BTV. Note the reddening of the skin at the top of the horn (coronary band). In some cases, horn may slough off



This is an image of the roof of the mouth (hard palate) of a sheep with BTV. Note there are blood spots (haemorrhages) on the ridges of the palate and also on the lips



A sheep with BTV. Note the swelling (oedema) of the muzzle and face and the crusting and discharge around the nose

I hope this is a useful update, further information can be found on the [Ruminant Health & Welfare website](#), or by speaking to any of our vets

Best wishes.

Ashley