

Dear All,

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter. Thankfully I'm writing this after the FMD scare in Worcestershire has been resolved and the announcement has been made that there never was any Foot and Mouth. I do think this highlights not only the importance of the ongoing monitoring and surveillance work we do as the potential outbreak was picked up quickly; had the worst case scenario played out, the response would hopefully have been quick enough to prevent further spread. Sadly it also shows the negative impact of speculation as there was a lot of less than kind posting on social media about this.

I'm afraid this is the "Bluetongue" issue, the farmer media is pretty saturated about bluetongue but this virus does pose a real risk to our livestock, especially sheep where over half of animals affected by the disease can be expected to die, with no treatment available. I would strongly urge all sheep farmers to vaccinate their flocks.

Cattle are also affected, thankfully not as seriously but you can also expect up to three times more youngstock deaths and seriously reduced fertility in your herd.

Although we usually consider the high moor as free from midge species, remember this isn't proven and for sheep it is quite a big wager being made on managing to keep clear of the virus!

As always if you want to discuss anything in this newsletter please do give us a call on the usual number, or you can email me on ashley.rubens@moorgatevets.co.uk

Bluetongue Virus Update

BLUETONGUE DISEASE

FREQUENTLY UNDERESTIMATED CONSEQUENCES

BTV detectable clinical signs:

- Temporary infertility
- Abortions, deformed fetuses, premature births
- Lameness, stiffness, detachment or deformation of the hooves
- Fever
- Panleukopenia

BTV serotype	Virulence
1	**
3	***
4	*
6	**


Losses

Direct losses:

- Reduced milk yield.
- Increase of mortality.
- Weight loss.
- Reduction of fertility rate.
- Abortion.
- Reduction of meat production.

Indirect losses:

- Increase of veterinary and medication costs.
- Loss of revenue.
- Trade restrictions limiting access to higher value markets.



- Ulceration of the mucous membranes: muzzle/mouth/eye
- Regurgitation
- Dyspnea
- Oedema
- Nasal discharge
- Hyperpyrexia
- Conjunctivitis
- Hiporemia


Reproductive problems

After recovery from the infection:

- In ewes: delays in the reproductive cycle, with absent or irregular estrus.
- In rams: temporary decrease in semen quality, reduced libido, or changes in reproductive behavior.

Other facts observed during the recent outbreaks of serotype 3 in Europe

- Vertical transmission.
- Increase in the number of diagnoses of rumen lesions.
- Increase in the number of diagnoses of inflammatory respiratory problems and/or pneumonia.
- Increased number of lungworm diagnoses.



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Find out more about Bluetongue disease!

Devon has reported several cases of bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) and a single case of serotype 12 (BTV-12) during the 2024-2025 vector season. A restriction zone is currently in place for the South-East of England, but it extends as far west as Ottery, and may well expand to include our area. The virus is primarily spread by biting midges and can affect all ruminants, with sheep being the most severely impacted.

PRACTICE FACILITIES

24 Hour Emergency Service
In-House Laboratory
Ultrasound scanning
Lambing Club
Herd and Flock Health Planning
Red Tractor Reviews
Bull Breeding soundness examinations
Semen Collection

BOVEY TRACEY SURGERY

Mill House, Station Road,
Bovey Tracey, Newton Abbot, TQ13 9AL
TELEPHONE – 01626 833023
EMAIL:
admin@moorgatevets.co.uk

MORETONHAMPSTEAD SURGERY

31 Court Street,
Moretonhampstead,
Newton Abbot, TQ13 8LG
TELEPHONE – 01647 440441

CHRISTOW SURGERY

Old Mines Road, Christow,
Exeter, EX6 7PL
For appointments/repeat prescriptions etc.

FOR OUT OF HOUR EMERGENCIES PLEASE
TELEPHONE: 01647 440441

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As you can see from the infographic, serotype 3, which we currently have in the UK is one of the most virulent (infectious) variants of the virus.

Cattle may show milder symptoms, such as:

- Nasal discharge and drooling
- Lameness and fever
- Reduced milk yield and lethargy

Prevention and Control

Preventing the spread of bluetongue virus is essential to protect your livestock and ensure the health of your farm.

Vaccination not only protects individual animals but also helps to reduce the overall spread of the virus within the herd, and remains the only tested and proven way to reduce the spread and severity of Bluetongue virus. Sheep require a single vaccination which can be done from 1 month of age in lambs which have been born to unvaccinated ewes, or 3 months if the ewes were vaccinated. Cattle need 2 doses, 3 weeks apart.

Early Detection is important, regularly check your animals for any signs of illness. Early detection of bluetongue symptoms will help prevent the spread of the virus. If you notice any unusual symptoms, such as those listed above, contact us immediately.

Implementing strict biosecurity measures (as discussed in the last newsletter) on your farm can significantly reduce the risk of bluetongue virus transmission. This includes:

- Housing Animals: Keep animals indoors during peak midge activity times, especially at dawn and dusk, to reduce their exposure to biting midges.
- Insect Control: Use insect repellents and install screens or nets to keep midges out of animal housing areas.
- Hygiene: Maintain good hygiene practices, such as regularly cleaning and disinfecting animal housing and equipment.
- Movement Restrictions Be aware of and comply with any movement restrictions which could be put in place to prevent the spread of bluetongue virus.

- When purchasing new livestock, ensure they come from reputable sources and are free from bluetongue virus. Animals from restriction zones should have been blood tested prior to sale, but due to the timing of testing and movement it could still be possible for disease to spread this way.

Vector Control Since bluetongue virus is primarily spread by biting midges, controlling the midge population is crucial. Reduce midge breeding sites by managing water sources and maintaining clean, dry environments.

