



BLUETONGUE:

GUIDANCE FOR GB LIVESTOCK KEEPERS

This guidance about bluetongue, who to contact and what to do is as a result of bluetongue disease in mainland Europe.

WHAT IS BLUETONGUE?

Bluetongue disease is caused by a virus transmitted by biting midges, which are most active between May and October. Bluetongue virus can infect all ruminants (e.g. sheep, cattle, goats and deer) and camelids (e.g. llama and alpaca). Sheep are most severely affected by the disease. Cattle, although infected more frequently than sheep, do not always show signs of the disease.

Outbreaks of bluetongue affect farm incomes through reduced milk yield, sickness, reduced reproductive

performance (failed pregnancies, abortion, central nervous system deformities in the calf or lamb) or, in severe cases, the death of adult animals.

Bluetongue virus does not affect people and consumption of meat and milk from infected animals is safe.

Bluetongue is a notifiable disease. That means if you suspect an animal is showing signs of disease you must tell the Animal and Plant and Health Agency (APHA) immediately. Failure to do so is an offence.

SIGNS OF BLUETONGUE

IN SHEEP:

- Lethargy, reluctance to move
- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and on the muzzle
- Discharge of mucus and drooling from mouth and nose
- Swelling of the muzzle, face and above the hoof
- Reddening of the skin above the hoof
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Fever
- Lameness
- Breathing problems
- Erosions on the teats

IN CATTLE:

- Lethargy
 - Crusty erosions around the nostrils and muzzle
 - Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
 - Redding of the skin above the hoof
 - Nasal discharge
 - Reddening and erosions on the teats
- Cattle do not often show clear signs of disease so owners should also look out for signs of fatigue and lower productivity including reduced milk yield.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you suspect bluetongue you must report it immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

- England: telephone 03000 200 301
- Wales: telephone 0300 303 8268
- Scotland: contact your local APHA Field Services Office

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

- **Monitor stock carefully and report any clinical signs of disease.** Your local vet can provide help in the diagnosis.
- **Source animals responsibly** and check the health status of animals you are looking to buy.
- **Consider vaccination** as a method of reducing the spread of infection. Vaccination is the only effective tool to protect animals from bluetongue. Consult your vet about the benefits of doing so and the availability of vaccine if this is something you are considering. Meat and milk from vaccinated animals is safe for consumption.
- **Maintain good biosecurity** such as washing equipment after use.



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