

News story: Bluetongue virus detected and dealt with in imported cattle

The UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has urged farmers to remain vigilant for signs of [bluetongue virus](#) after the disease was successfully picked up in a number of cattle imported from France through our robust post-import testing regime.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) identified the disease in cattle after they were brought to Preston and Kendal in England and two locations in Scotland. A total of 32 animals came from the same assembly centre in France, in an area where multiple cases of bluetongue have been confirmed since September this year.

Action is being taken to ensure there is no spread of the disease, with movement restrictions at the affected premises, targeted surveillance and the humane culling of animals where necessary.

Strict rules on the movement of livestock from regions affected by bluetongue are already in place. Farmers are reminded that animals from these regions must be accompanied by the relevant paperwork to clearly show they meet certain conditions designed to reduce disease risk, such as correct vaccination.

The UK remains officially bluetongue-free and exports are not affected.

Chief Veterinary Officer for the UK, Nigel Gibbens, said:

Bluetongue does not pose a threat to human health or food safety, but can cause severe disease in some cases or have a negative impact on farm incomes, for example by causing reduced milk yield in cows and infertility in sheep. We continue to carefully monitor the situation in France, where Bluetongue disease control measures are in place.

This detection is a good example of robust disease surveillance procedures in action and should highlight to farmers the risks which come with bringing animals from disease-affected areas into their herds.

It is also a timely reminder for farmers that the disease is still a threat, despite coming towards the end of the period when midges are most active. Keepers must remain vigilant and report any suspicions to APHA. They may also want to talk to their vet to consider if vaccination would benefit their business.

The affected animals will be dealt with under the Trade in Animals and Related Products regulations. Cattle with a high risk of being infected with

the BTV-8 strain of bluetongue or which had not been vaccinated before being exported will be humanely culled. Farmers will have the option to send those animals without fully compliant paperwork back to France or to cull them to reduce the risk of disease spreading to susceptible UK livestock.

Movement restrictions will be in place on the premises for several weeks until testing rules out spread via local midges.

Bluetongue virus is transmitted by midges and affects cows, goats, sheep and other camelids such as llamas. It can reduce milk yield, cause sickness, reduce reproductive performance or, in the most severe cases, cause death of infected animals.

The UK Government has worked closely with a number of groups to raise awareness of the threat of bluetongue through the [Joint campaign Against Bluetongue \(JAB\)](#). The most recent case of the disease in the UK came in 2007. The UK has been officially free from the disease since July 2011.