

Press release: Bluetongue virus detected and dealt with in two imported cattle

The UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has urged farmers to remain vigilant for bluetongue virus after the disease was successfully picked up in two cattle imported from France through our routine post-import testing regime.

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Pirbright Institute identified the disease in the animals when they were brought to North Yorkshire in England from an assembly centre in Central France, where bluetongue continues to slowly spread.

Bluetongue does not affect people or food safety. The virus is transmitted by midge bites and affects cows, goats, sheep and other camelids such as llamas. It can reduce milk yield and cause infertility and in the most severe cases is fatal for infected animals. The midges are most active between May and October and not all susceptible animals show immediate signs of contracting the virus.

Action is being taken to ensure the risk of spread of the disease is reduced, with movement restrictions at the affected premises. The two cattle were isolated and have been humanely culled.

Strict rules on the movement of livestock from regions affected by bluetongue are already in place and farmers are reminded that animals imported 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.

Following the successful interception of the infected animals, the UK remains officially bluetongue-free, the risk of the disease remains low and exports are not affected.

Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer for the UK, Graeme Cooke, said:

Bluetongue does not pose a threat to human health or food safety, but the disease impacts farming, causing reduced milk yield in cows and infertility in sheep.

This detection is an example of our robust disease surveillance procedures in action but must highlight to farmers the risks which come with bringing animals from disease-affected areas into their herds. Regulations and systems are in place for the benefit of our UK livestock industry.

It is also a clear reminder for farmers that the disease remains a threat, despite coming towards the end of the season when midges

are active.

Farmers must remain vigilant and report any suspicions to APHA. Farmers should work with their importer to make sure effective vaccination needs are complied with, source animals responsibly and consider the health status of their own herd if they are not protected

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

Farmers have the option to send animals without fully compliant paperwork back to France or to cull them as a measure to reduce the risk of disease spreading to susceptible UK livestock.

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.

More information about bluetongue is [available here](#).