

Voluntary Vaccination against Bluetongue in the Channel Islands

In August an outbreak of bluetongue virus (BTV) was been reported in central France (500km from the Channel Islands). Sheep are most severely affected than cattle but cattle are the main reservoir of the virus.

In **sheep** typical clinical signs are:

- facial swelling
- eye and nasal discharges
- drooling as a result of ulcerations in the mouth
- respiratory problems
- high rectal temperature
- Lameness with inflammation at the junction of the skin and the coronary band
- Death (up to 70%)

In **cattle** typical clinical signs are:

- swelling of the head and neck
- eye and nasal discharges
- drooling as a result of ulcerations and swelling in the mouth
- swollen teats

Photographs of Livestock with Bluetongue disease

Sheep



Fig 1: Early clinical case of BTV showing depressed appearance.



Fig 2: There is a swelling of the face and ears and the sheep often appears stiff and reluctant to move.



Fig 3: Facial oedema and nasal discharge and excoriation of BTV infected sheep.



Fig 4: Typical foot lesion found in BTV infected sheep involving coronitis and inflammation of the whole claw region but no formation of blisters.

Cattle



Fig 5: There is oedema (swelling) of the face



Fig 6: There is lacrimation but no obvious eye lesions.

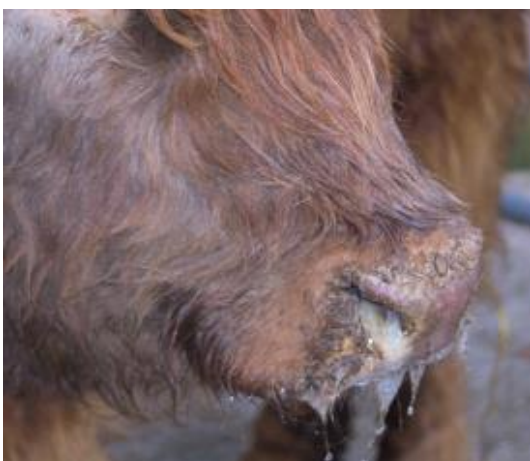


Fig 7: There is a serous to mucopurulent nasal discharge



Fig 8: Affected cattle are febrile (up to 40.0°C) and appear stiff due to swelling of the coronary band at the top of the hooves



Fig 9: Extensive teat erosions may develop in some cattle.

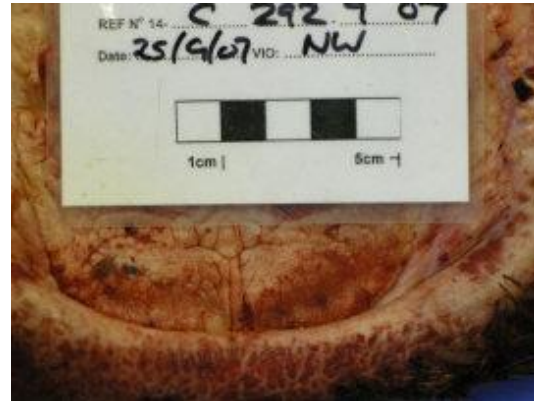


Fig 10: Diffuse reddening of the dental pad with multifocal haemorrhages on the upper lip and dental pad

Both Jersey (June 2012) and The Bailiwick of Guernsey (May 2015) are officially BTV free and Bluetongue is a notifiable disease in the Channel Islands.

BTV is carried by biting midges that could arrive in the Channel Islands by being blown on the wind from France. BTV transmission from midges to livestock is temperature dependent and is unlikely to occur when the average daily temperature is below 15°C. In Guernsey disease transmission is extremely unlikely to take place between the months of December and March when average air temperatures are below 12°C, and unlikely to take place between the months of November and June when temperatures are below 15°C.

In collaboration with Jersey, The Bailiwick of Guernsey has undertaken a veterinary risk assessment and following advice from Defra we concluded that the threat of an incursion of bluetongue into The Bailiwick from France is low to medium. However it is unlikely that transmission of disease from midges to livestock would occur before March 2016.

The Commerce and Employment Department are liaising with veterinary wholesalers in France and the United Kingdom to secure a supply of inactivated BTV-8 vaccine.

The primary course of the vaccine requires 2 subcutaneous injections 3 to 4 weeks apart. Vaccinations can be given to naïve livestock (cattle, sheep, goats, llamas) from 1 month of age. It is anticipated that the vaccine cost will be around £6 a dose. Vaccines must be administered to livestock by private veterinary practitioners who will charge for their visit, time and consumables. All animals vaccinated must be identified and where appropriate a record of vaccination must be recorded in pedigrees. Where animals are not individually identified they will need to be permanently marked to indicate that they have been vaccinated; this may take the form of an ear-tag. A list of all vaccinated animals must be provided to the Department by the private veterinary practitioners. Livestock keepers who intend to have their animals vaccinated should aim to have this completed before the end of March 2016.

The Department needs to assess what the likely demand for BTV vaccination is going to be from livestock keepers. Please contact Caroline Creed (01481 234567 or caroline.creed@commerce.gov.gg) and let her know how many animals you are going to want to vaccinate against BTV. Orders for vaccine will be taken by the Department up until 23/10/2015.

David Chamberlain

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