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National Disease Control Centre

Bluetongue Alert Number 02 of 2020



NDCC Bluetongue Alert Number 2 of 2020

Outbreaks in Europe

Luxembourg

- Further to Bluetongue Alert Number 1 of 2020, issued on April 2nd, Luxembourg confirmed an outbreak of BTV 8 on 7th September 2020. Clinical disease was reported in 2 animals in a herd of 435. This is the first time Bluetongue has been reported in Luxembourg since 2008.

France

- France has reported 6 more outbreaks of BTV 8 with mortalities in both cattle and sheep.

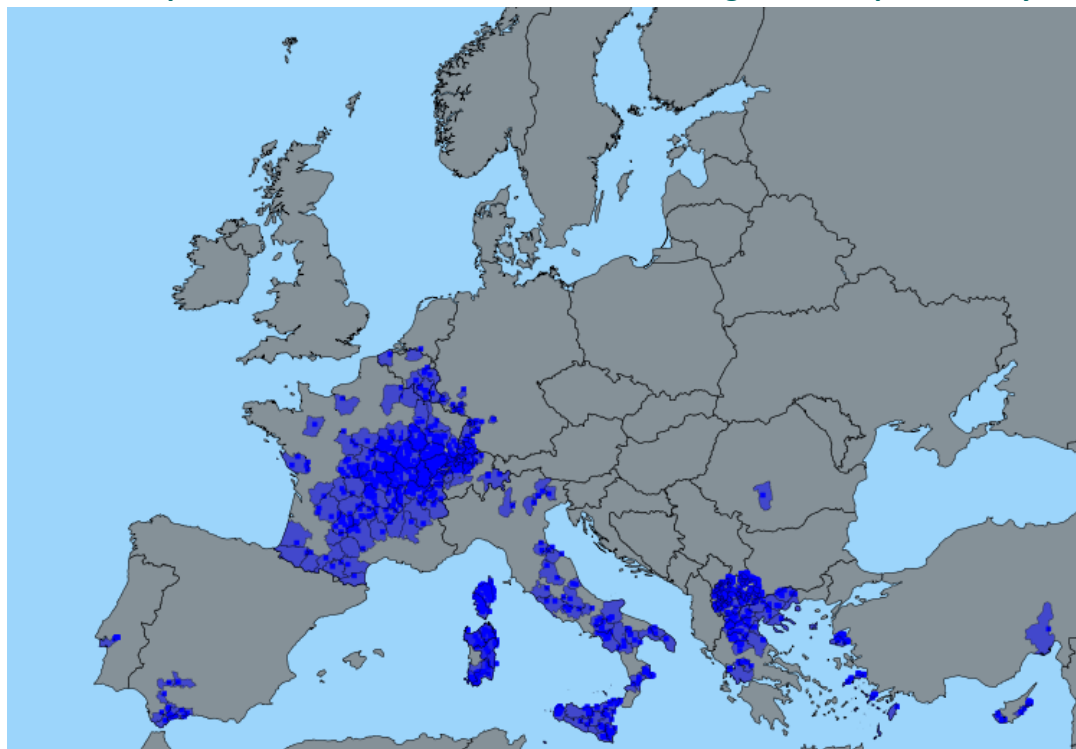
North Macedonia

- The first outbreak of BTV 4 in North Macedonia since October 2014 was confirmed in sheep and goats on 9th July, in the west side of the country. Since then there have been a further 314 outbreaks affecting sheep and goats in the east and north of the country.

Greece

- The disease continues to spread south and Greece reported its first outbreak of BTV 4 since 2016 on the mainland at the end of July. 131 outbreaks have since occurred with 54 deaths reported in sheep and goats

The map below shows the distribution of Bluetongue in Europe currently



Map courtesy European Commission



Further information

- Clinical signs of Bluetongue include depression, anorexia, weight loss and congestion of nasal and buccal mucosa.
- The BTV 8 strain that re-emerged in North West Europe in 2015, continues to affect France, Belgium, Switzerland, parts of Germany and Luxembourg. BTV 8 can result in transplacental transmission and infection of fetuses in cattle and sheep. Bluetongue should, therefore, be considered as a possible differential when investigating poor fertility and offspring born with congenital brain malformations.
- BTV 4 (as with most other BTV serotypes), seldom causes clinical signs in goats, but some meat producing sheep breeds can become seriously affected, with up to 30 percent mortality being reported during past outbreaks

Measures to prevent Bluetongue coming to Ireland

Ireland remains free of Bluetongue and as we are still in the high risk period for Bluetongue transmission, it is important that we continue to implement measures to keep the disease out, particularly around the importation of ruminant animals from affected countries.

Bluetongue is spread between animals by midges and in Ireland the period of midge activity is between late March up to early December each year. 90-95% of the midge species in Ireland are capable of transmitting bluetongue. The importation of bluetongue infected animals represents the biggest risk of the disease entering Ireland.

Farmers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders should be vigilant and ensure that they are fully aware of the presenting clinical signs of Bluetongue in both cattle and sheep, and that they report any suspicion of disease to their Veterinary Practitioner or Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) without delay. In addition anyone importing ruminant animals into Ireland should consider the following risk mitigation measures:

- **Do not import ruminant animals from BT restricted areas unless absolutely necessary.**
- **If you have to import then do so in the part of the year where there is no midge activity (from early December to end of February approximately).**
- **Only import animals from reputable sources.**
- **Seek additional assurances to ensure that animals are not infected with BT prior to departure, such as a recent negative PCR* test for BT antigen carried out in an accredited laboratory.**
- **Prior to importing contact your RVO for advice and to arrange for prompt testing post importation.**
- **Post importation, keep any imported animals isolated and indoors until they have been tested for BT by staff from this Department and have returned a negative test result****



Please read and follow these biosecurity guidelines before making any decision to import:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/bluetonguedisease/BiosecurityAdviceFarmersImpLivestockVer1260318.pdf>

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***PCR** or polymerase chain reaction is a technique used in molecular biology to detect virus genome in this case. A test for BT is usually carried out on blood. A positive PCR test essentially means that the virus is present in the sample tested.

** DAFM implements a risk-based post import testing protocol whereby all ruminant animals originating from mainland Europe are sampled for BTV on their arrival in Ireland.

Further information on Bluetongue:

DAFM website:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/bluetongue/>

Bluetongue information leaflet for photographs of clinical signs:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/bluetonguedisease/BluetongueFactsheet2017210617.pdf>

European Commission:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/bluetongue_en

EU Regulation 1266 of 2007 on the control of Bluetongue:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1526483808190&uri=CELEX:02007R1266-20120605>

Contact details for RVOs available at:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contact/>

