



NDCC Bluetongue Virus Update 4 of 2026

1. Bluetongue virus in Ireland: An evolving situation

- Bluetongue virus serotype-3 (BTV-3) has been confirmed in multiple cattle herds to date.
- The first case of BTV- 3 was confirmed in a suckler herd in Co. Wexford on 24th January 2026. It was detected through the culled cow routine surveillance in a slaughterhouse.
- To date, surveillance has identified BTV-3 in additional herds in the following counties; Wexford, Wicklow, Louth, Laois, Monaghan, Kildare, Cork, and Tipperary. Investigations indicate these cases are historic cases from last Autumn and not active infections.

2. Weather modelling and associated risk

- Research has shown that a period of warm weather where the average daily temperature is greater than 12 degrees Celsius (°C) is required for the replication of the Bluetongue virus (BTV) within the midge i.e. for a midge to become infective and capable of transmitting virus to a susceptible ruminant host. The concept of a ‘*degree-day*’ is a 24-hour period where the temperature is 1°C above 12°C. Approximately 50 of these ‘*degree-days*’ are required for completion of the BTV viral replication phase within the midge host.
 - For example, a 24 hour period where the temperature is 20 °C would equate to 8 ‘*degree days*’. Therefore, approximately 6 full days at a consistent temperature of 20 °C would provide the 50 ‘*degree day*’ threshold.
- With the recent rise in temperature it is likely that the cumulative temperature threshold (50 ‘*degree-days*’) required for viral replication within the midge vectors has been reached in the warmer parts of the country (South-East). This means that any infected midges which survived the winter/spring will have the potential to become infective and transmit virus to a naïve ruminant host. For other parts of the country, especially more northern parts and those at higher altitude, it is unlikely that the cumulative temperature threshold has yet been reached however, with the forecast improvement in weather next week, this will likely change.
- In England and southern Wales, weather modelling has shown that the cumulative temperature threshold has been met. This means that it is very likely that there are infective midges now present in sites across England and southern Wales. If weather conditions occur which are supportive of midge migration across the Irish sea, similar to those which enabled the incursion of BTV-3 to Ireland last Autumn, then there is a possibility of infective midges being blown across again.
- Recent wind modelling from the last fortnight indicates wind conditions have not yet been favourable for such a migration (blowing West to East).
- Animals must be viraemic in order to transmit BTV to naive biting-midges.

2. Bluetongue Vaccination

- As the risk of BTV transmission is now increasing with the warmer weather and possibility of incursion from England/Wales, any farmers who have not yet vaccinated stock should consider vaccination.



- Vaccination can reduce viraemia and is therefore an important measure in reducing the risk of further spread. Vaccination, even as temperatures increase, is therefore encouraged.
- Farmers who have not yet vaccinated should seriously consider vaccination as a protective tool against the clinical disease losses associated with Bluetongue. With increasing temperatures, viral replication within the midge population will resume, resulting in an increasing environmental burden of virus. As this will increase over time, there is still likely benefit in vaccination.
- Vaccination of breeding animals is especially important given the effects on fertility and the ability to transmit virus in semen during mating.
- BTV-3 vaccines are **permitted in Ireland under licence**.
Contact veterinarymedicineswmc@agriculture.gov.ie for more information on vaccine licencing

3. Ongoing Surveillance

- Farmers and PVPs nationwide are encouraged to submit abortion samples (post-abortion dam bloods and deformed/aborted fetuses) to their local RVL. Bluetongue screening has been added to these profiles as part of disease surveillance. Any follow up investigations will not result in on farm restrictions.
- Suspect animals should be reported to your local [Regional Veterinary Office](#) or via the National Disease Emergency Hotline on 01- 492-8026 (outside of normal office hours).

4. Clinical signs of Bluetongue Virus

A wide range of clinical signs are associated with bluetongue virus:

- Fever
- Inappetence (loss or lack of appetite)
- Drop in milk yield
- Reddening of the mucus membranes
- Sores on the nose, gum and dental pads
- Swelling of the face, lips and tongue (i.e. “Bluetongue”)
- Breathing difficulties if the tongue swells
- Drooling
- Discharge from the eyes and/or nose
- Lameness
- Early embryonic death, abortion or deformities in offspring/foetus
- In severe cases, death can result

6. Further information

Further information on bluetongue virus is available at www.gov.ie/bluetongue and [Bluetongue - Food Safety - European Commission](#) or email NDCCBTV@agriculture.gov.ie

This update is designed to keep you informed and help protect Ireland’s ruminant population and livelihoods. The cooperation of all stakeholders is crucial in the protection of the health and welfare of the Irish livestock industry.

National Disease Control Centre

11th June 2026