



NDCC Bluetongue Virus Update 1 of 2026

1. Bluetongue virus confirmed in Co. Wexford

- **Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV3) infection has been confirmed in one herd in Co. Wexford.**
- **This is the first occurrence of BTV infection in a homebred animal in Ireland.**
- Detection was achieved through routine surveillance conducted by DAFM under the culled cow scheme.
- Blood samples collected from a suckler cow that was to be culled were tested serologically, and antibodies to bluetongue virus were detected.
- Subsequently, additional animals from the herd of origin were blood sampled for testing.
- Testing by the Reference Virology Laboratory confirmed positivity of an additional animal by PCR, and serotype 3 was confirmed.
- **Positive animals did not show clinical symptoms.**
- **Positive animals were not imported.**
- **Likely source of incursion is by infected midges blown across the Irish sea.**
- **No restriction zones** have been introduced due to the low transmission risk associated with current environmental temperatures.
- **The situation may evolve alongside new epidemiological findings.**
- **Active surveillance** and tracing are ongoing.



Figure 1 detailing confirmed case of bluetongue detected in Wexford January 2026

For Bluetongue specific queries please email NDCCBTV@agriculture.gov.ie



2. What this means for Ireland

- **There are no food safety or human health risks from Bluetongue. Milk and meat are safe to consume.**
- Bluetongue virus is spread by infected **biting midges** (*Culicoides species*) which are present in Ireland and are generally most active between April and November. The replication of the virus can only occur in the midge in temperatures above 12-15°C. Spread of the virus is less likely to occur in winter and early spring months.
- Ongoing **surveillance** is being carried out to ensure early detection in additional herds.
- **However, vigilance is critical** to detect any cases promptly before the virus can replicate and become established in local livestock and midge populations.

BE VIGILANT FOR THE CLINICAL SIGNS OF BLUETONGUE VIRUS, EARLY DETECTION IS CRITICAL

Clinical signs of bluetongue virus

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

- 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
- Abortion or deformities in offspring/foetus
- In severe cases, death can result

Clinical symptoms can be **severe in sheep**, while **cattle and goats tend to be asymptomatic or have subclinical disease**. Infection in wild ruminants such as deer vary in susceptibility by species.



Figure 2 detailing clinical symptoms of bluetongue infection in cattle and sheep. Photo Acknowledgement Copyright of the Animal Health Service Deventer, The Netherlands, and The Arbovirology Programme, Institute for Animal Health, Pirbright

3. Impact on trade

Movement of animals for export and import must meet standardised animal health certification requirements. Please see here information for each Member State with regards to trade: [Bluetongue - Food Safety - European Commission](#)

- **Movements of live susceptible ruminants within the EU:**

- **The following countries specify no additional conditions for BTV3:** Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic (Confined establishment moves only), France, Germany, Hungary (Confined establishment moves only), Luxembourg, Netherlands and Spain.
- Italy and Portugal specify that if the serotype is present at destination, they have no specific conditions. BTV3 is present in both Italy and Portugal.
- **Movement direct to slaughter:** Allowed if they come from establishments in which infection with bluetongue virus (serotypes 1-24) has not been reported during the last 30 days prior to the date of departure of the consignment.
- **Movement of live susceptible animals for breeding & production to other EU member States MAY be possible if the Member State is not BTV Free and allows derogations from BTV requirements.** Specific details for each country can be found here: [Bluetongue - Food Safety - European Commission](#)
- **Northern Ireland (NI)** – BTV 3 vaccines do not have an established duration of immunity so cannot be used as a basis for certification currently. DAFM engaging with DAERA.



- **Movements of live susceptible ruminants to third countries:** In general, Third Country bilateral animal health certificates require country freedom from Bluetongue for a period of 12 to 24 months. DAFM are engaging with Competent Authorities of Third Countries.
 - **Great Britain (GB):** BTV 3 vaccines do not have an established duration of immunity so cannot be used as a basis for certification of **live animal movements**. DAFM is engaging with DEFRA.
- **No implications for dairy products to be exported to GB, NI or the EU.**
- **Movements of germinal products (semen, ova, embryos)**
 - We will be sending out a sector specific update shortly

IMPORTANT TO NOTE that importing semen from affected countries is not without risk

4. Bluetongue Vaccination

- **Vaccination against bluetongue serotype-3:**
 - BTV-3 vaccines are **permitted in Ireland under licence**.
 - BTV-3 vaccines do not fully stop infection/disease but greatly reduce viremia and severity of clinical symptoms.
 - Three vaccines have obtained European Marketing Authorisation for use:
 - *Syvazul BTV 3 (sheep) – Stock available soon*
 - *Bluevac 3 (sheep and cattle) - Stock available soon*
 - *Bultavo 3 (sheep and cattle) – currently in stock in Ireland*
 - The duration of the immunity period guaranteed in the specifications of these vaccines has not been determined to date. Therefore, vaccination cannot currently be used to meet EU standard certification requirements.
 - Contact veterinarymedicineswmc@agriculture.gov.ie for more information on vaccine licencing
- **Vaccination against bluetongue serotype-8:**
 - BTV-8 vaccines are **permitted in Ireland under licence**.
 - BTV-8 vaccines are currently in widespread use in France and some other EU Member States.
 - BTV-8 vaccines are approved, and they have an established duration of immunity.
 - Animals vaccinated with BTV-8 vaccines may be certified for the purposes of movement into Ireland.

5. How to report a suspect outbreak of bluetongue virus:

Report a suspect to your local [Regional Veterinary Office](#) or via the National Disease Emergency Hotline on 01- 492-8026 (outside of normal office hours) without delay.



6. Bluetongue Situation Summary across Northern Ireland, Great Britain and Europe

• Northern Ireland:

- On the 5th of December 2025, the UK National Reference Laboratory Pirbright confirmed Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) infection in a herd near Bangor, County Down.
- Since then, BTV3 outbreaks in three further farms in Co. Down have been confirmed, and an additional one is under investigation.
- Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) has been introduced (See figure 2).
- Moves of susceptible species from the free area in NI into the Bluetongue Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) is permitted under General Licence from Tuesday 9 December 2025.
- The rules around moving animals and animal products from susceptible species remain unchanged.
- For additional information please visit [Bluetongue Situation Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)



Figure 3 detailing Temporary Control Zones introduced in NI. Source: [Bluetongue Map Viewer](#)

- Great Britain: There have been **272** cases of bluetongue in Great Britain since July 2025. 251 in England (243 cases of only BTV-3, 1 case of only BTV-8 and 7 cases with both BTV-3 and BTV-8), 21 cases in Wales (BTV-3) and no cases in Scotland.
 - Since 1st July 2025 the **Restricted Zone** for bluetongue was extended to cover **all of England** (Figure 2). Movements within England are permitted without a movement license or pre-movement testing.
 - Since 21st September 2025, only breeding males (cattle sheep and goats), pregnant cattle and camelids, require pre-movement testing or vaccination with Bultavo-3 for moves from the Restricted Zone to [Scotland](#), as the reduced temperatures are considered to lower the risk of onward spread of disease from infected animals.
 - On 10th November, an **all-Wales restricted zone** was introduced. Livestock movements between England and Wales no longer require vaccination or pre-movement testing.
 - Further information: [Bluetongue: news, information and guidance for livestock keepers - GOV.UK](#)

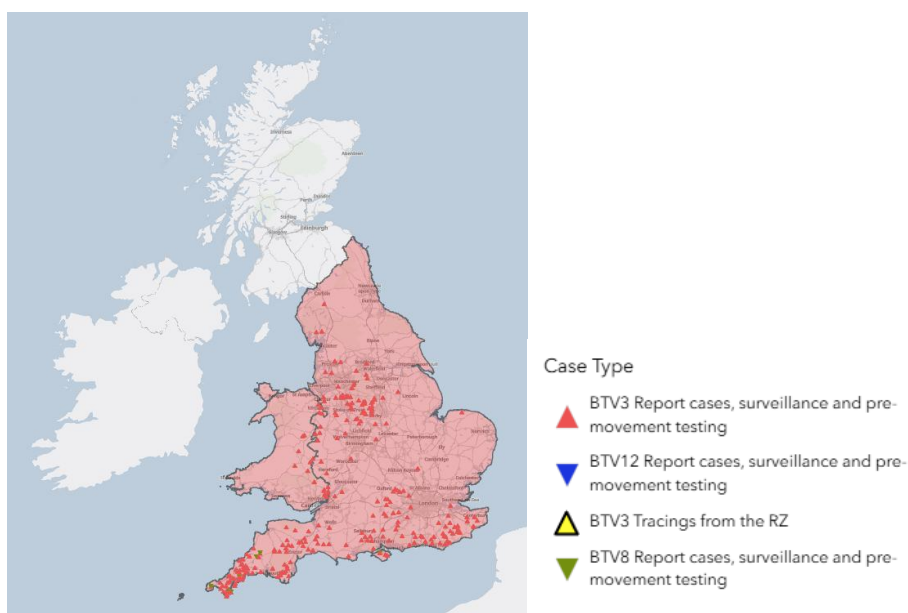


Figure 4 detailing confirmed cases of bluetongue detected in Great Britain since July 2025 (as of 26/01/2025). Source [APHA Bluetongue Case Map](#)

- BTV-3 and BTV-8 continue to circulate widely in **mainland Europe**. Other bluetongue serotypes such as BTV-1 and BTV-4 have been detected in several European countries (2023-2025).

7. Further information

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

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.

For Bluetongue specific queries please email NDCCBTV@agriculture.gov.ie

National Disease Control Centre

26th January 2025