

Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands
Ministear airson Àiteachas, Cùisean Mara agus nan
Eilean
Jim Fairlie MSP

a b c d

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mark Ruskell, MSP

Via email rural.committee@parliament.scot

13 August 2026

Dear Convener,

I am sorry to inform you about two confirmed cases of Bluetongue Virus (BTV).

Following veterinary investigations of reports of a notifiable disease to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Chief Veterinary Officer, Scotland, Sheila Voas confirmed two cases BTV in close proximity to each other. The first case detected the presence of bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV3) was confirmed on 9 August 2026 in a female six month old lamb on a farm near Newton Stewart. The lamb failed to recover following treatment and was eventually euthanised on welfare grounds prior to the disease being confirmed. The results of the clinically unaffected animals sampled were all negative both for PCR and serology indicating a low level of infection.

The second case was a premises located 2km away from the initial positive case. Two homebred ewes out of over 1900 sheep on the holding showed signs of notifiable disease and a report was made to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) on Monday 10 August. Both affected animals were euthanised on welfare grounds on 11 August, and tested BTV3 positive on 12 August.

Both affected premises were placed under movement restrictions on suspicion of disease and will remain under restriction whilst the veterinary investigation continues.

APHA are investigating to determine if these are isolated cases or if there is evidence of further circulation in Scotland but laboratory results from these farms indicate very recent infection.

Increased surveillance has started on surrounding farms. The most plausible route of infection suggests disease has been blown in on a plume of infected midges from a number of possible infected areas of the UK. Spread from undisclosed infection within Scotland is also possible but less likely based on current evidence.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

a b c d ~~efg~~ a

Following discussions with key representatives of the livestock industry and given the low level of disease detected, at this moment no bluetongue disease control zones in Scotland have been imposed, but the position is being kept under review.

Since 2023, England followed by Wales have no longer been recognised as free from bluetongue. What began as small pockets of disease in the southeast in 2023 from an influx of midges from Northern Europe, has now spread more widely. The first case confirmed in 2026 was in Staffordshire in England, quickly followed by Wales, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. In line with the GB Bluetongue disease control strategy restricted zones were declared covering all three administrations.

The bluetongue virus is only able to replicate effectively in temperatures above 13°C. As all other parts of the UK showed evidence of BTV3 circulating in season 2025/26, BTV3 restricted zones were declared across all three administrations. Following consultation with key industry stakeholders, I agreed to put in place movement controls between 1 June 2026 and 9 September, based on historical temperature data. This was to protect Scotland from incursions through movement of infected animals. The controls in place for susceptible animals and germinal products moving from bluetongue Restricted Zones are set out in general licence [EXD608\(EW\)](#). Keepers must follow these conditions when moving a BTV susceptible animal to live in Scotland. Checks by APHA suggest very good compliance with licence conditions.

My officials have put together some suggested public messaging for you and other local MPs and MSPs to promote on their own social media channels below. I welcome your support in circulating these key biosecurity messages. Regular updates are posted on the Scottish Government's social media channels, and you can find posts to share at the following links:

X: [Scot Gov Rural \(@ScotGovRural\) / Twitter](#)

Facebook: [ScotGov Rural | Edinburgh | Facebook](#)

Public Messaging

Bluetongue is a notifiable insect-borne viral disease that affects sheep, cattle, other ruminants such as goats, and camelids such as llamas.

It is mostly spread by midges, although it can also be spread by natural or artificial breeding, and through the placenta from mother to offspring.

It does not affect people or food safety.

Outbreaks can result in prolonged animal movement and trade restrictions. The disease itself can be very serious, with high rates of death in infected sheep and significant fertility and productivity problems in infected cattle.

Animal keepers should be very vigilant for any signs of notifiable disease and immediately report any suspected cases to the [Animal Plant and Health Agency](#). **It is a legal requirement to do so.**

If thinking of bringing animals into Scotland, we call on animal keepers to observe responsible purchasing and ensure they consider the risks carefully, check the health status of the animals and make sure they meet all licence or import conditions.

We strongly recommend all keepers of ruminants consult their private vet on how best to protect themselves, in particular by vaccination against bluetongue.

To keep up to date with the latest information you [sign up for animal disease alerts from APHA](#). If you have already subscribed to this service from APHA and no longer wish to receive these disease alerts, complete the information on the [subscriptions page](#). You will then have the option to update your subscription.

End

Further Information

I have also written in similar terms to John Cooper MP, Finlay Carson MSP, the Scottish local authorities, and have copied all South Scotland regional MSPs.

Needless to say, should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact my officials at Animal.Health@gov.scot.

Yours sincerely,

JIM FAIRLIE