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02/10/2026

Dear Mark,

I wish to draw your attention to a Scottish Statutory instrument, the Bluetongue (Scotland) Amendment Order 2026, which was laid in parliament on 2 October and will come into force on 3 October. The instrument was laid under the laid only procedure, and did not follow the convention of allowing at least 10 to 14 calendar days between the laying date and coming into force date.

Following engagement with key Scottish livestock industry organisations, and confirmation that that bluetongue virus is actively circulating, I have agreed a change to the current bluetongue control strategy, expanding the current restricted zone in South West Scotland to cover the whole of Scotland from Saturday 3 October 2026. Vaccination remains the most import tool in the control of this disease.

Currently, under Article 24 of the Bluetongue (Scotland) Order 2012, voluntary vaccination is permitted in the “free area” of Scotland. A “free area” is a part of Scotland which is not subject to bluetongue restrictions. However, 2012 Order does not enable Scottish Ministers to permit vaccination in a restricted zone.

This instrument’s policy objective is to amend article 24 of the 2012 Order to permit the voluntary vaccination of animals in a bluetongue restricted zone, with an inactivated vaccine, to protect animals against the bluetongue virus.

It is imperative that this very minor change is made immediately to ensure that Scottish Ministers can permit livestock keepers across Scotland to voluntarily vaccinate their animals within the restricted zone, once this is extended to the whole of Scotland. The amendment ensures that farmers across Scotland will not be in breach of the law if they choose to proceed with vaccination in the restricted zone.

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The instrument will be signed and laid on Friday 2nd October and come into force on Saturday 3 October. Once the amendment is in place, an updated vaccination declaration will also be made which makes clear that voluntary vaccination is permitted in the Scotland wide restricted zone.

The instrument does not add any regulatory burden on livestock keepers and helps facilitate a change in the Scottish Government's bluetongue disease control strategy, which is supported by all of Scotland's key livestock industry organisations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jim Fairlie", positioned below a horizontal line.

JIM FAIRLIE

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