



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

Mark Ruskell MSP
Convener
Rural Affairs Committee

Via email rural.committee@parliament.scot

21 August 2026

Dear Mark,

I wrote to you on 13 August to inform you about two confirmed cases of Bluetongue Virus serotype 3 (BTV3) near Newton Stewart in Dumfries and Galloway.

Since then, unfortunately, there have been three further premises where BTV3 has been confirmed. Four of these premises are in very close proximity to one another. All affected premises are under movement restrictions whilst veterinary investigations continue.

The third case was on a premises located less than 2km away from the initial positive case. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) performed an investigation and found two sheep were presenting with clinical symptoms and sent samples for testing. One sheep tested positive for BTV3. The animal was culled for disease control purposes and compensation will be paid by Scottish Government to the owner at market rates.

The fourth positive detection was in a 17 month old bovine on a contiguous premises to the initial positive case, and was identified during surveillance carried out by APHA as part of their veterinary enquiry. All the affected animals have been culled for disease control purposes and compensation will be paid by Scottish Government to the owner at market rates. Additional testing at the affected farms has also identified 12 positive cattle so far that will now remain restricted.

The fifth case, on a premises near Lockerbie, Dumfries and Galloway was confirmed on 19 August 2026. Given that this new case is consistent with the virus circulating in the midge population it is no longer appropriate or proportionate to cull infected animals, but they will remain restricted to the premises.

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



Given the distance between this new case and the cluster of four infected premises near Newton Stewart, and that significant number of positives are being disclosed by surveillance of healthy animals at the first four premises Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Jesus Gallego, has concluded that additional measures are required locally to protect the areas of Scotland that are still free from disease.

The Scottish Ministers have now declared a Temporary Control Zone in accordance with The [Bluetongue \(Scotland\) Order 2012](#). The [Declaration](#) was signed at 12:25pm on 20 August 2026. Within the zone a range of different controls are in place, including restrictions on the movement of any animal, embryo, ovum or semen.

This zone imposes movement controls on susceptible animals to help contain undisclosed pockets of disease within the area whilst surveillance is undertaken in and around that area. That surveillance will help determine if the disease is actively circulating or spreading away from the zone. A TCZ can be revoked at any time. However, such controls can also cause severe financial hardship to those in the affected region so must be done where a real benefit can be determined. To help alleviate the impact of controls, some movements would be permitted under general licence. These would be:

- Moves from a TCZ to slaughter
- Moves from a TCZ to slaughter outside of TCZ
- Movement to a premises inside a BTV TCZ
- Movement from a TCZ to a disease-free area in Scotland if disease status is confirmed by way of PCR testing, or for cattle, are currently vaccinated with Bultavo-3 vaccine product

Animals will be permitted to move within the zone. A specific licence will be needed to freeze germinal products (semen, ova and embryo) anywhere in a restricted zone and testing is required.

If it is determined that disease is circulating, the TCZ would be replaced with a Restricted Zone. The Restricted Zone must remain in place for a period of time in which evidence must be provided that disease has been eradicated. This may take up to two years.

Increased surveillance has started and it is possible we may detect further positive animals.

The most plausible route of infection still suggests that the virus has been blown in on plumes of infected midges from a number of possible infected areas of the UK. As we expect to approach cooler temperatures over the coming weeks this should help to reduce the chance of disease getting a hold in Scotland. Current evidence indicates the bluetongue virus is only able to replicate in the infected midge effectively in average temperatures above 13°C. This means that there remains an opportunity to keep the disease out of the areas of Scotland outside the TCZ through a test and cull policy, whilst giving producers time to vaccinate and protect their stock.

My officials are maintaining a close dialogue with key industry organisations on current disease control measures and the current situation. As a result of that engagement, today I have agreed that:

- from 20 August, a Temporary Control Zone has been [declared](#) with movement restrictions in place within this Temporary Control Zone on animals, embryos, ovum or semen.
- from 22 August, animals travelling from Scotland to gatherings such as markets or shows in bluetongue-affected areas of England and Wales must return home the same day. This replaces the current rule allowing up to four days away. Under the new "same day" rule, animals must be unloaded at the market after sunrise and loaded for the return journey before sunset.
- from 10 September, all susceptible livestock moving from a bluetongue control zone into Scotland will need to be vaccinated, with limited exemptions. Animals not staying overnight, covered under the "same day rule", will not need to be vaccinated to make this journey.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, other changes to the existing control strategy could occur depending on the disease situation at the time.

The Scottish Government permits the use of bluetongue vaccination in Scotland, and keepers are encouraged to use this to protect their animals against the worst effects of the disease. Vaccination is the only viable long-term control measure once disease has become endemic in an area.

I am aware many producers are concerned about the availability of BTV3 vaccines as there is very high demand. The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is working closely with vaccine manufacturers, policy colleagues from all UK administrations and other partners to monitor BTV vaccine availability and support continuity of supply. To address the shortage of GB authorised vaccines, Defra is working with manufacturers to enable them to submit wholesale import applications for Northern Ireland & EU authorised BTV-3 vaccines, enabling contingency vaccine supplies to be assessed in advance. I continue to urge all keepers of susceptible animals to discuss vaccination with their private vet. Farmers and vets are advised to place orders for vaccine now to ensure access to supplies.

As with my previous letter of 13 August, I have shared again below some suggested public messaging for you and committee members 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](#)

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

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver



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 can [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, David Mundell MP, Craig Hoy MSP, Finlay Carson MSP and all South Scotland regional MSPs.

[Redacted signature block]

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

JIM FAIRLIE

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

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Silver

