



15th February 2024

Irish Angus Cattle Society
24 Hawthorn Crescent,
Townparks,
Carrick On Shannon,
Co. Roscommon

Our Ref: NDCC/CMC.17/15.02.2024

Re: Call to action to Prevent the Introduction of Bluetongue Disease to Ireland

I am writing to you out of concern for the serious implications an outbreak of Bluetongue would have for the Irish agri-industry, especially our livestock sector, and to emphasise what you and your members can do to lessen the risk of Ireland being in a position of having to fight this devastating disease. Bluetongue can have very severe on-farm impacts and Ireland trades internationally on having never had an outbreak of Bluetongue.

As you are likely aware, the threat of Bluetongue disease to the Irish livestock sector has been of significant ongoing concern for many years. However, since September 2023 the risk and likely impact has increased because the virus is causing significant disease in the Netherlands and neighbouring countries, has reached England and now could reach Ireland. We need to be even more vigilant as the circulating Bluetongue virus in western Europe and England is 'serotype 3' and as yet there is no vaccine available for it. Serotypes (1, 4, 8) continue to circulate in other parts of Europe.

Bluetongue virus is spread by midges. Whilst animals being brought into Ireland may fulfil testing and animal health legislative requirements, the disease could spread to Ireland through the introduction of infected but as yet undetected ruminant animals. These animals could then infect midges in Ireland and start a disease outbreak. Reducing the numbers of introduced cattle and sheep from areas where Bluetongue is present will reduce the risk of introducing this disease and this is the message I would like you to convey to your membership.

The Department does carry out post-entry testing on introduced ruminants but these tests are not an absolute guarantee that disease is not present. Therefore, I strongly urge that you

advise your members to be extremely vigilant around introducing live ruminant animals whilst this risk pertains.

More information on Bluetongue can be found on the DAFM website: www.gov.ie/bluetongue

If you have any further queries on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact the National Disease Control Centre at ndcc@agriculture.gov.ie

Yours sincerely,

15/02/2024

X 

Dr Martin Blake
Chief Veterinary Officer | WOAHA Delegate
Signed by: Martin Blake CVO