



The
GEORGE
Farm Vets

Bluetongue Update

May 26

ASSESS YOUR RISK
PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS
DEFEND YOUR STOCK

#BattleBluetongue



BATTLE 
BLUETONGUE



Bluetongue is the disease in the forefront of our minds last year that we pushed to the back for winter, but something we need to be talking about now.

Bluetongue is a viral disease affecting ruminants; cattle, sheep, goats, deer and camelids. Transmission occurs through the biting *Culicoides* midge species which can be blown up to 200km.

Since July 2025 there have been 310 cases of bluetongue in England – this includes both cases of BTV-3 and BTV-8. Most of the cases have been due to BTV-3. Over the year we have been able to build a better picture of the key clinical signs we may see with bluetongue infection. In-utero transmission from dam to foetus is possible and cattle can be infectious for weeks before they show clinical signs.

Key signs of bluetongue that we have been seeing:

In cows

- Most commonly seeing cases related to abortion, foetal abnormalities and still birth
- Infertility
- Milk drop
- Fever
- Lethargy
- Nasal discharge
- Erosions around the nostrils, muzzle, udder
- Reddening of the mouth, eyes, nose, udder and coronary band

33% of cases in 2025/26 vector season showed infertility, abortion or milk drop.

In Sheep

- Ulcers in the mouth and nose
- Swelling of the lips, mouth, head, neck and coronary band
- Abortions
- Foetal deformities
- Fever
- Breathing problems
- Death

In calves

- Blindness
- Stargazing posture
- Weakness
- Difficulty standing
- Poor or absent suck reflex
- 'dummy calves'

5% of cases in 25/26 vector season showed dummy calf syndrome.



COMPASSION RESPECT INTEGRITY SUSTAINABILITY PROGRESSION CARE

T: 01666 823035 Option "1" for visits or enquiries, "2" for medicines, "3" for TB testing

What is the impact of BTV-3?

Mortality, production losses and reproduction losses. BTV-3 has more severe signs than BTV-8.

Key case study facts from the Netherlands:

- Affected sheep flocks saw mortality rates 15 x higher than unaffected ones, with a case fatality rate of 75%.
- Infected dairy herds experienced milk drop of 1kg per cow for 9 weeks

UK case study facts based on 3 suckler farms in East Anglia

- 5-17% of calves were either stillborn or born with congenital neurological signs
- On one farm 20% of breeding stock found to be barren

Vaccinate or not to vaccinate?

Vaccination is recommended due to the high number of cases we are seeing in the south west particularly Devon and Cornwall already.

The midge that transmits bluetongue can survive in temperatures over 12 degrees, therefore the risk period is probably longer than we originally anticipated and we are definitely within it right now!

If you vaccinated last year, it is looking likely* that a single booster dose within 12 months for most of our cattle farms and a single dose for sheep. The length of immunity is likely to vary between the different bluetongue vaccines so speak your farm vet or the practice about protecting your flock and herd over the current risk period.

*The booster vaccination interval is awaiting its authorisation licence, we will let you know if anything changes.

What about the different strains?

The current vaccine we are using covers for BTV-3, this is the primary strain currently being seen in the UK, making up 98.7% of the cases. There is no cross protection between strains, however there is a BTV-8 vaccine available if required. Given that BTV-3 presents with more severe clinical signs, it is the strain that is most prevalent in the UK and the risk of infection this year could be higher (if we have a wetter summer), revaccination with BTV-3 is advised. The risk factors and decision to vaccinate will vary from farm to farm, speak to the practice or your named vet to discuss in more detail.

** Courses - Second Quarter 2026 **

BCVA CHCSB Lantra Accredited foot Trimming Courses:

First Aid for Feet: Wednesday 20th May. £300+VAT, Malmesbury

Intermediate Foot Trimming Course: (3 days) Will be organised according to demand, so please let us know if you are interested

AHPA Accredited AI Course: (location TBC) - £550 + VAT

- Wednesday 20th - Fri 22nd May 2026

Short Courses: - £75 + VAT

- **Care and Assessment of the Sick Cow and Down Cow Management:** Thursday 14th May, Location TBC, 1.30pm-4pm
- **Youngstock Care and Management:** Thursday 21st May, Iron Acton. 1:30pm-4pm.

For more information or to book a place on any of our courses please call the office on:
01666 823035 Ext. 1 or E: technical.training@georgevetgroup.co.uk



Hannah