

## Updated Outbreak Assessment #2

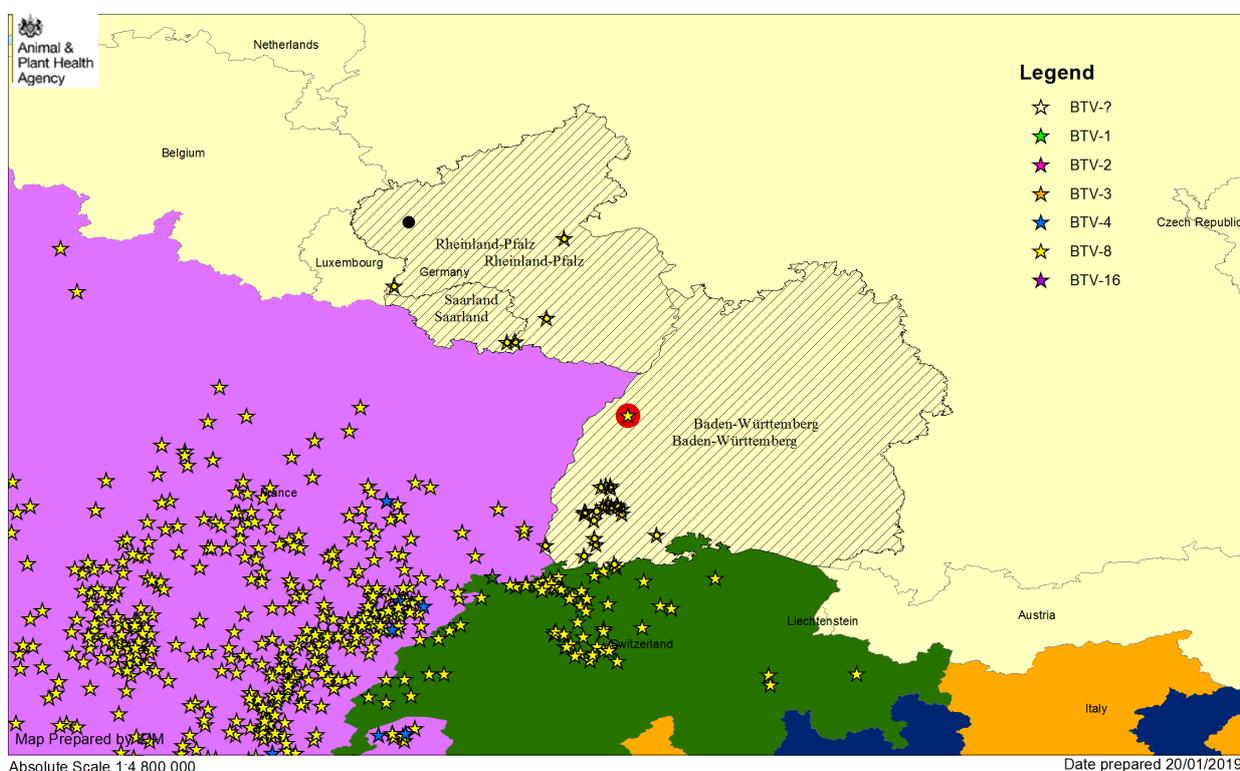
# Bluetongue virus (BTV-8) in Germany

21 January 2019

Ref: VITT/1200 BTV-8 in Germany

## Disease report

The previous outbreak assessment for BTV-8 in Germany on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018 reported an outbreak of BTV-8 in cattle in mid-December in the district of Rastatt in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. The outbreak is shown in the map below and was located near to the southern border with France. In view of the large number of BTV-8 cases across the border in France and also to the south in Switzerland, this case was not unexpected. However, in the second and third weeks of January, a further 28 outbreaks of BTV-8 were reported in south-western Germany as shown in the map. Of these, again 23 are near to the south-west borders with France and Switzerland and are not unexpected. However, five of the outbreaks in Germany are further north and now place Luxembourg, eastern Netherlands and eastern Belgium at risk.



BTV in Europe in 2018 and current Restriction Zones\*

Restriction zone around German cases of BTV-8

\* restriction zones are available on the EC website and not necessarily correctly represented here due to GIS issues

0 20 40 80 120 160 Km

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The Competent Authority has put in place the legally required 150 km zone (see map). Consigned animals (in particular cattle, sheep and goats) may only be moved from this area to areas not under restriction if the animals have been vaccinated against BTV-8 or tested for BT with a negative result. In the area around the outbreak population, monitoring will be intensified.

## **Situation assessment**

The most north-westerly outbreak was in Trier-Saarburg on the western border of Germany and was detected on 8 January in a herd of 157 cattle, of which one was affected and slaughtered on the 9 January. This outbreak is very close to the border with Luxembourg. Another outbreak slightly to the south-east was detected in Zweibruecken on the 10 January in a herd of 276 cattle with two animals affected. The most recent outbreak on 18 January involved 10 affected cattle in a herd of 358 in Bad Kreuznach and is also the most northerly case in Germany in this current outbreak. These five more northerly outbreaks in Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz may be due to the movement of cattle from south-west regions of Germany, rather than vector-borne spread from France over the past few weeks. Indeed, the vector season has ended and due to the heavy snow currently in southern Germany and Switzerland, midge activity is unlikely to be the cause at this stage. Two new German regions now fall into the restriction zones – Hessen and North Rhine Westphalia. Post import testing is in place for these areas.

Vaccination of cattle against BTV has been recommended in Germany since February 2016 on a voluntary basis (Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, FLI, 2018), because of the BTV cases in neighbouring France and Switzerland. However, vaccination is not mandatory as it is in France and Switzerland, and according to the Competent Authority, only about 25% vaccine coverage has been achieved, which is not sufficient for the comprehensive prevention of outbreaks (FLI, 2018). For this purpose, at least 80% of susceptible animals must be vaccinated.

The reports documented here of spread in south-western Germany and western Germany suggest wider spread to other parts of Germany could have occurred through previous movement of cattle from the south-west. Animals that have been vaccinated against BTV-8 are protected against reinfection, however, the duration of protection is limited, in some cases to one year, dependent on vaccine used. In addition, the current BTV-8 seems to be less virulent than the virus which circulated in Germany from 2006, as there have been many reports of subclinical infection in France and Switzerland this year. However, there are reports from Switzerland indicating higher levels of virulence in sheep (including some deaths). BTV-8 was last reported in France on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2018. As of the end of November, average temperatures in the past two weeks (from mid to end November) in Northern France and Southern England had been on or below the threshold for vector transmission (12°C) (APHA, 2018).

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Since 19 September 2018, TRACES has reported certificates for 37 consignments of live bovines being imported into the UK from Germany. This is a total of 750 live animals.

## **Conclusion**

In view of the latest disease intelligence, unsuitable weather in France, Germany and Switzerland, the reduced midge activity at this time of year and poor virus replication rates, the risk the UK remains LOW. Over the last three months there has been a non-negligible risk of importing BTV-8 positive animals from Germany, however, these would pose a low risk to GB cattle because of the low likelihood of vector transmission at this time of year. We will continue to keep this under review.

We would like to remind all livestock owners that they should source animals responsibly by working with their private veterinarians and livestock dealers to make sure animals are correctly vaccinated and protected prior to travel. This means that animals must be correctly vaccinated against BTV-4 and BTV-8 or be naturally immune to both virus serotypes, prior to leaving the Restriction Zone.

We would also like to remind keepers that if they wish to take animals for show purposes to a restriction zone and then return to a free area, they will need to make sure the animals are vaccinated *against both virus serotypes* prior to travelling into the Restriction Zone.

We will continue to monitor the current situation in Germany and France and will report any further updates from the German and French Authorities, particularly with regards to the evolving BTV-8 situation in Germany.

## **References**

APHA (2018). Bluetongue Assessment 2018 No 12 - Risk of airborne introduction to UK from the near-continent.

FLI (2018). <https://www.fli.de/en/news/animal-disease-situation/bluetongue-disease/>

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