

BLUETONGUE DISEASE **CONTINGENCY PLANS** **FOR GREAT BRITAIN**

The attached is the contingency plan for dealing with outbreaks of Bluetongue disease in Great Britain, in accordance with Article 18 of Directive 2000/75/EC introducing Community measures for the control of Bluetongue.

Revised April 2007

BLUETONGUE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR GREAT BRITAIN

This document summarises the contingency plans for responding to an outbreak of Bluetongue disease (BT) as drawn up in 2007 in Great Britain (Northern Ireland(not part of Great Britain) has a separate plan). It should be read in conjunction with [Defra's Framework Response Plan for Exotic Animal Diseases](#).

Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive have responsibility for detailed contingency planning within their own administrations. Some elements of the planning are specific to each of their institutional arrangements but are mutually complementary. In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of disease in England, Scotland or Wales; Defra, Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government will ensure close liaison in order to co-ordinate the emergency response process.

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LEGAL POWERS

1.1 BLUETONGUE: EU LEGISLATION

Measures for the control and eradication of Bluetongue are set down in Council Directive 2000/75/EEC and other Commission Decisions.

The key provisions of the Directive which domestic legislation implements are:

- Notification to the competent authority of the Member State if Bluetongue is suspected;
- Measures on a suspect premises include:
 - Prohibition of movements of susceptible animals to and from the premises;
 - Confinement of animals (where practicable) at times when vectors are active;
 - Regular insecticide treatment of animals, their housing and surroundings, as directed by Authorities;
 - Surveillance of the area where disease or presence of the vector is suspected;
- When disease is confirmed a 20km Zone, and a wider (150km) Protection and Surveillance Zone to be established surrounding the infected premises;
- Measures as applying to a suspect premises extended to the infected premises and all premises with susceptible animals in the 20k zone;
- Attempts to eradicate the disease by control of the vector, where appropriate and on the basis of a veterinary risk assessment the possible slaughter of affected animals and/or vaccination of animals.

See Annex 2 for a summary.

The competent authority in GB is Defra (England), Scottish Executive (Scotland) and Welsh Assembly Government (Wales).

1.2 BLUETONGUE: GREAT BRITAIN LEGISLATION

The statutory powers for the control of Bluetongue are contained in the following domestic legislation: the Bluetongue (England) Order 2003, the Bluetongue (Scotland) Order 2003 and the Bluetongue (Wales) Order 2003. These enact the provisions of Directive 2000/75 in England, Scotland and Wales respectively.

1.3 NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED BLUETONGUE PROCEDURES AT INFECTED PREMISES THE DESTRUCTION OF CARCASSES THE CONTROL OF MOVEMENTS

The domestic legislation requires the notification of suspicion of Bluetongue to Animal Health (an executive agency of Defra) and gives powers to control the disease. This includes powers to control the movement of animals, powers to slaughter animals (if necessary), to require, where appropriate, vaccination against Bluetongue and to require control of the vector. Carcasses are not directly infectious to other animals. Disposal of carcasses do not require special provisions over and above those specified for high risk animal waste products under the EU animal by-products regulations.

1.4 ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

Animal Health is the lead operational agency and will be supported by Local Authorities who will enforce and execute the provisions of the Bluetongue Order 2003, unless the legislation makes specific provisions otherwise. Local Authorities may be helped in this by other civil organisations. The penalties for not complying with the legislation are detailed in Part V of the Animal Health Act 1981 as amended.

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

- 2.1 Animal health is a devolved policy area. In any disease outbreak, the three administrations will seek to work within an agreed framework reflecting the fact that Great Britain (GB) is a single epidemiological unit and the role of Animal Health as a GB-wide organisation.
- 2.2 In England, responsibility for the control of Bluetongue rests with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) who delegates the direction of control strategies to the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). The development of policy for the control of bluetongue is the responsibility of the Food and Farming Group of Defra. Roles of key personnel are outlined in Section 5 of [Defra's Framework Response Plan for Exotic Animal Diseases](#). Defra's Communications Directorate are responsible for arranging publicity and awareness for notifiable diseases.
 - 2.2.2 The response to a disease alert will be controlled by a single-line command structure for control of animal diseases.
 - 2.2.3 Structures in England are the same as those outlined in [Defra's Framework Response Plan for Exotic Animal Diseases](#)
- 2.3 Scottish Ministers are responsible for the policy response to any disease outbreak in Scotland. In this the overall management of the Scottish situation will be by a Disease Strategy Group (DSG) which will be chaired by the Head of Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) or the Head of the Rural Group. Its members will consist of senior officials

including CVO (Scotland) and the head of the Operations Group and a representative of Animal Health. The DSG will supervise the handling of the Scottish outbreak and will ensure that Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Parliament, stakeholders and the media are appropriately briefed.

- 2.4 The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) is responsible for the policy response to an outbreak in Wales and would establish an Emergency Co-ordination Centre Wales (ECCW) to supervise the handling. The ECCW would ensure that Welsh Ministers were kept informed and appropriately involved in determining disease control strategy and the handling of wider issues arising from the outbreak. The Welsh Assembly Government would work in close co-operation with Defra, the other devolved administrations and Animal Health.
- 2.5 Animal Health is responsible for the implementation of the operational response across Great Britain. Animal Health Contingency Planning Division has responsibility for the preparation of detailed contingency plans and emergency preparedness. The Communications Directorate are responsible for arranging publicity and awareness for notifiable diseases. Divisional Veterinary Managers have responsibility for emergency preparedness at the local level.
- 2.6 Throughout Great Britain, the Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) is the responsibility of the Regional Operations Director(or the Operations Director Wales) supported by the Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) and a Divisional Operations Manager (DOM). It includes representatives from relevant agencies, local authorities, other key stakeholders and any other personnel necessary for the operational control of a disease outbreak.

THE NATIONAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE (NDCC)

- 3.1 The National Disease Control Centre will be established on confirmation of a disease outbreak. The unit is fully equipped with appropriate telephony and IT equipment.

The responsibilities of the NDCC include:

- maintaining an overview of the national picture and co-ordinating the deployment of national resources;
- receiving information on suspected cases;
- co-ordinating surveillance;
- identification of operational problems and resolving them;
- commissioning daily situation reports from Local Disease Control Centres;
- preparation of management information reports.

3.2 In the event of an animal disease outbreak, the rapid emergency provision of staff from within Animal Health and its associated Departments and Agencies will be a key factor in the successful and timely control of the disease. In England the Defra Management Board will provide clear direction in order that non-essential staff can volunteer their services and be released quickly within Defra. Similar arrangements are in place in the Scottish and Welsh administrations.

3.3 The Joint Co-ordination Centre(JCC) is part of the NDCC and contains :

Disease Reporting Team
Vet Operations
Operational Communications
Non-Veterinary Operations
HR - Personnel
Finance
Vaccination Operations (when appropriate)

The Animal Health Contingency Planning Director will maintain job descriptions for key personnel within these units.

3.4 The CVO will seek technical advice in controlling a disease outbreak from the Bluetongue Expert Group (see paragraph 6.1) and policy advice from the Animal Diseases Policy Group (ADPG).

THE LOCAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE

4.1 Bluetongue preparedness and control at the local level is the responsibility of the Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) / Regional Operations Director (ROD) (if appointed) at the Animal Health Divisional Office where the Local Disease Control Centre would be established. Each Centre is managed by the DVM or ROD who are responsible to the Animal Health Chief Executive. In Scotland the DVM and ROD will operate jointly and will report to the Disease Strategy Group. In Wales a Divisional Operations Manager (DOM) will be appointed to manage the LDCC alongside the DVM, who will be responsible for veterinary management. The Operations Director Wales will manage the Emergency Co-ordination Centre Wales and have oversight of the LDCC. There are 24 Animal Health Divisional Offices:

[Animal Health Offices](#)

4.2 In the event of a disease outbreak the DVM / ROD may decide to set up a temporary Local Disease Control Centre more convenient to the disease outbreak.

4.3 The local centres are equipped with the facilities, stores and documents necessary to undertake the tasks.

4.4 Standing arrangements are in place for access to major equipment. Procurement and Contracts Division within Defra have put in place regional

and local contracts with suppliers to meet the requirements in dealing with notifiable diseases.

4.5 The responsibilities of the local centres during an outbreak are to control the disease by:

- arranging the preliminary investigations (see instructions to staff) and transport of specimens to the diagnostic laboratories;
- liaison with the NDCC (in consultation with the Devolved Administrations) to undertake actions in the protection and surveillance zone;
- ensuring restrictions are put in place on infected premises and with Local Authorities to arrange movement controls and closure or supervision of markets;
- supervising procedures at infected premises (if necessary, valuation, slaughter and disposal of compulsorily slaughtered animals);
- undertaking targeted serological surveillance programmes in protection and surveillance zones as required by the Epidemiological team in Defra Food and Farming Group;
- vector surveillance and, where applicable, control at infected premises and elsewhere in protection/surveillance zones;
- (where necessary) arranging compensation to stock owners;
- inspection of livestock premises in the local area on a targeted basis;
- In the event of emergency vaccination being agreed, the supervision and co-ordination of the vaccination programme;
- maintaining accurate records of activities on each infected premises;
- ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data on the Disease Control System database.

4.6 In the event of an outbreak the Local Authority has responsibility for the enforcement and execution of the legislation (Under article 17 of the Bluetongue Orders 2003 (England and Scotland) and under article 18 of the Bluetongue (Wales) Order 2003 except where otherwise expressly provided.

4.7 Animal Health will maintain a database of their staff who are able to respond to any animal disease outbreak. On authority from the Animal Health Chief Executive, individuals will be alerted with immediate effect and deployed as instructed by DVMs. In addition vets and other staff from other parts of Defra and its agencies, and from other government departments will be alerted and deployed as appropriate. Private veterinary surgeons who act as Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs) will be used as appropriate. If overseas veterinary resource is deemed necessary, the CVO will send a formal request

to the signatories of the International Animal Health Emergency Management Reserve and also to EU Member States, if necessary.

- 4.8 Local Emergency Response Plans include details of key personnel who will undertake the roles as defined by the Animal Health Operational Instructions. These individuals will be called upon as soon as disease is confirmed and are expected to take up post as soon as possible (within 24 hours of request). DVMs are responsible for maintaining these lists. Key personnel would include staff for the following sections:

- Tracing
- Epidemiology
- Allocations
- Surveillance
- Licensing
- Communications
- Field Operations
- Field Team
- GIS
- DCS (data handling)
- Facilities
- HR -Personnel
- Finance
- Record Control Centre

COMMUNICATIONS

5.1 MEDIA

News Releases about a disease outbreak in England will be communicated through the Defra Communications Directorate Press Office. The CVO or Deputy CVO would take on a Defra spokesperson role. For outbreaks in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland there would be appropriate spokespeople appointed. RODs/DVMs will liaise with their local Government News Network (GNN) representative to ensure that accurate and timely briefings are given to the media and stakeholders. During an outbreak in Scotland, media will be briefed by the Scottish Executive Press Office (who will also provide any support required at the LDCC) and in Wales by the Welsh Assembly Government Press Office.

5.2 WEBSITE

Defra's website is a key source of information in the event of an outbreak of disease. Once disease is confirmed, a dedicated site will be established as soon as possible. This is the responsibility of the Head of Emergency Preparedness Core Team in the Defra Food and Farming Group in co-operation with the Head of News Media in the Communications Directorate. Devolved Administration websites can also be expanded to include

information about the disease and its implications, with appropriate links to the Defra website.

The website will include:

- news and Information;
- the number of Infected Premises (IPs) updated daily;
- full details of infected areas including protection and surveillance zones with interactive maps;
- full details of disease control measures and restrictions.
- advice to farmers, local authorities and other rural stakeholders;
- advice on rural activities;
- links to relevant websites (e.g. the Devolved Administrations, Meat and Livestock Commission, Environment Agency, Natural England, Food Standards Agency, National Farmers Union, Local Authority sites etc);

Detailed technical information on Bluetongue, its cause, control and legislation is already available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/bluetongue/index.htm>

5.3 HELP LINES

Defra General Helpline (08459 335577) will be escalated as necessary to prepare for increased public interest. This will include identifying staff resources, the need for supplementary helplines plus provision of briefing for helpline staff. The Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government have the facilities to set up Scottish and Welsh helplines as the need arises.

5.4 NATIONAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE (NDCC)

The Chief Veterinary Officer/ Chief Executive of Animal Health will establish a National Disease Control Centre as soon as circulation of disease in an area is suspected (see section 3).

The NDCC has a pivotal role in collating accurate management information on local activities and acting as the definitive source of information for publication. It is responsible for co-ordinating the regional situation reports and collating key statistics to be reported to the wider Government Community. The particular characteristics of a Bluetongue outbreak mean that the CVO would have flexibility to adapt the NDCC to meet the specific circumstances of the outbreak. The relatively slow-moving nature of the disease means that the 'battle rhythm' would need to be appropriately scheduled. There will be early agreement on what should trigger standing down of the NDCC.

5.5 OPERATIONAL PARTNERS

These are organisations who play a key role in assisting Defra and Animal Health in managing certain critical aspects of the disease control operation. Full details are in Section 6 of [Defra's Framework Response Plan for Exotic Animal Diseases](#)

5.6 INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders would have a key role to play in a Bluetongue disease outbreak, and are working in partnership with government to develop our preparedness activities. They would be closely involved with the disease control strategy's delivery, including providing input into decision-making.

A stakeholder is a person or body (e.g. farming industry, rural businesses) who is affected by the management (operations and policy) of an outbreak of an exotic animal disease.

BLUETONGUE EXPERT GROUP

6.1 The Bluetongue Expert Group would be chaired by the Deputy CVO on behalf of the UK CVO and include the Institute of Animal Health (IAH) Consultants; entomologists; epidemiologists; representatives from Defra Food and Farming Group (Vets and policy) and Animal Health vets / administrative staff. The Expert Group is a group of specialists who will provide advice to senior management on surveillance programmes, analyse information and advise on the implementation and proposals to amend control strategies.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- 7.1 A range of measures are in place in Defra, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly Government and Animal Health to provide additional staff in the event of an emergency. The measures include a volunteers register for non veterinary staff which can be called on if needs be and the ability to seek assistance from other government departments, which has been formally recognised in a central Memorandum of Understanding.
- 7.2 The HR Director of the Animal Health maintains a list of veterinary and technical and administrative staff who can be called on in the event of an outbreak of Bluetongue.
- 7.3 In addition to these personnel a number of call-off arrangements are in place for veterinarians employed by local authorities and the Meat Hygiene Service. Local Veterinary Inspectors supplemented by temporary veterinary staff

would also be used as appropriate. There are also arrangements in place if overseas veterinary staff are required.

AVAILABILITY OF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- 8.1 Detailed instructions and guidance for procurement professionals and action by Defra Procurements and Contracts Division (PCD) for Animal Health can be found in the Procurement and Contracts Division Contingency Plan.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CALL-OFF CONTRACTS

- 8.2 Procurement and Contracts Division have put in place, regional and local contracts with suppliers to meet the requirements in dealing with notifiable diseases. PCD will review such contractual arrangements on a regular basis. Consideration will be given to the suitability of national contracts in order to ensure that the suppliers contained remain capable of fulfilling their commitments. A list of such contracts is maintained by PCD. DVMS must liaise with PCD to ensure they have adequate contractual cover in the event of an outbreak. The PCD Contingency Plan introduces a local procurement and contracts team to manage these contracts in the event of an outbreak of a notifiable disease. PCD will ensure that the suppliers are:

- readily available to fight the disease;
- of suitable quality to complete the tasks set;
- able to provide best value for money;
- financially vetted;
- capable of providing all required services.

- 8.3 Local emergency response plans will guide DVMS/RODs to where they can seek advice on procurement procedure.

PURCHASE/ HIRED GOODS REGISTERS

- 8.4 DVMS/ RODs will ensure that the generic purchased/ hired register is installed in their respective Animal Health District Office (AHDO) and that staff are familiar with its functionality.

DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY

- 9.1 EU Council Directive 2000/75/EEC lists the Institute for Animal Health (IAH), Pirbright as the Community Reference laboratory. This laboratory will also act as the National Reference Laboratory.
- 9.2 Standing arrangements for the delivery of specimens to the diagnostic laboratory include using national couriers for road transport and/or the national airlines where convenient. It is estimated that samples can be delivered to the laboratories within (8) hours under most circumstances. Stocks of sampling equipment are held at the AHDO.

EMERGENCY VACCINATION

- 10.1 The EU Directive permits the use of vaccination as a control measure in certain circumstances.
- 10.2 In the event of a decision to vaccinate against Bluetongue by the CVO, and subject to the availability of a suitable, approved vaccine, supplies of vaccine would be ordered by the CVO. The CVO has emergency powers to approve vaccines in certain situations for vaccines without market authorisation. At present, the UK does not hold a marketing authorisation for use of such vaccines. Vaccination could therefore only be used on a vaccinate to kill basis.

DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES

11.1 The carcasses of animals infected with Bluetongue are not directly infectious to other animals. Animals which have died of the disease must be disposed of in accordance with legislation laid down in the Animal Waste Directive 90/667/EEC implemented by the Animal By-Products Order 1999 and the Animal By-Products Regulation, EC/1774/2002. Where animals are compulsorily slaughtered, Animal Health would be responsible for arranging the disposal of carcasses in the same way.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

- 12.1 Training for members of staff is as follows:
- All veterinarians joining the veterinary service are given instruction in Bluetongue control;
 - All veterinarians in the service undergo a refresher-training programme;
 - Training for technical staff who will participate in field aspects of Bluetongue control and for office staff who will staff Local Disease Control Centres is undertaken locally.
- 12.2 A tabletop training programme for key staff for the National Disease Control Centre likely to be involved in handling a Bluetongue outbreak is currently under development. Local Disease Control Centre staff undergo regular exotic disease training days and participate in exercises.

PUBLICITY AND DISEASE AWARENESS

- 13.1 The Defra website has information about Bluetongue, including a Technical Review of the disease, the virus and the vectors and the Bluetongue Disease Control Strategy for the UK. The Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly Government also have a websites in place that can be expanded quickly as the need arises.
- 13.2 Private and Animal Health veterinarians will in the course of their routine visits to their clients' livestock holdings disseminate information about notifiable diseases and disease control strategies. Official visits by Animal Health veterinary and technical staff include:-
- registration visit to new keepers of livestock;
 - investigation of reports of suspected disease;
 - welfare inspections on farm;
 - advisory and inspection visits to large livestock units, livestock dealers premises, artificial insemination studs, units rearing exotic species and zoological collections;
 - attendance at livestock markets and major agricultural shows.

The effect of this system of official advisory and inspection visits is to ensure that all livestock keepers receive advice on statutory disease control procedures and are kept aware of national and international animal disease risks. All holdings with livestock are registered, and receive visits as necessary.

- 13.3 Information and advice regarding the prevention, diagnosis and control of notifiable diseases is available at all times from the Animal Health Divisional Offices and every report of suspected disease is investigated by a Veterinary Officer who should arrive on the premises within 2 hours of the report being made.

ANNEX 1 ABBREVIATIONS

AHDO	Animal Health Divisional Office
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
Defra	Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DCS	Disease Control System
DOM	Divisional Operations Manager
DSG	Disease Strategy Group
DVM	Divisional Veterinary Manager
EU	European Union
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GNN	Government News Network
HR	Human Resources
IAH	Institute of Animal Health
IP	Infected Premises
JCC	Joint Coordination Centre
LA	Local Authority
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
NDCC	National Disease Control Centre
PCD	Procurements and Contracts Division
ROD	Regional Operations Director
SEERAD	Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
VEROD	Veterinary Exotic Diseases Research and Official Controls Division
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

ANNEX 2. SUMMARY OF THE CONTROL MEASURES WITHIN THE UK'S CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR BLUETONGUE, 2007

Ruminants

Affected farms:

- Complete movement restrictions
- Epidemiological and entomological surveillance

20km zone:

- Strict movement restrictions, in accordance with legislation (2005/393/EC).
- Targeted epidemiological and entomological surveillance.

Broader 100 and 150km zone(s):

- Movement restrictions in place, and movements out of the zones prohibited, except where permitted in accordance with legislation (2005/393/EC).

Live ruminant products

All zones:

- Transport prohibited in all zones

Vector

20km zone:

- Strong guidance on application of insecticides on ruminants and buildings, and on housing animals at high risk periods.

Wider zone(s):

- Application of insecticides on vehicles transporting ruminants