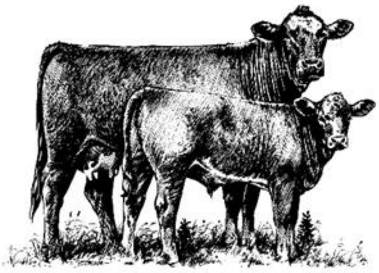
Animal & Plant Health Agency



SRUC

Great Britain cattle quarterly report, disease surveillance and emerging threats

Volume 30: Quarter 1 (January to March) 2026

Highlights

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Introduction and overview

This quarterly report reviews disease trends and threats for the first quarter of 2026 (Q1), January to March. It is compiled using data available at the time of writing. It contains interesting cases, and analyses carried out on disease data gathered from APHA, SRUC Veterinary Services division of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), and Surveillance Pathology Partners; and intelligence gathered through the Cattle Expert Group networks. We are aware that there were SRUC data missing from the database at the time of writing. This could not be rectified in time, and analysis and trends based on later updated data may therefore differ from this report. The focus will therefore be on trends detected in APHA data from England and Wales, plus interesting and unusual cases from the GB Surveillance Network. In addition, links to other sources of information, including reports from other parts of the APHA and Defra agencies, are included. A full explanation of how data is analysed is provided in the annexe available on GOV.UK.

Dairy sector update

Prices: GB average farmgate price was announced by DEFRA as being 35.05 pence per litre (ppl), down 0.86ppl form the month previous. Revised prices for January and February show January's prices down 0.17ppl and February's down 0.15ppl. The lasted announced farm gate prices have broadly stabilised, with some processors lifting the prices, while others have declines and may holding steady.

Production: GB milk deliveries through Q1 remained elevated, reaching 3.1% up on the same quarter in 2025.

January and February increased by 3.7% respectively and March by 1.8%. We are still annualising against strong growth versus the previous year, generating a compound effect.

We are up 4.2% for Q1 against the 5-year average, which represents a slowdown from the previous quarter's 7% premium.

The milk year has ended at a high of 13.02 billion litres.

The milk to feed price ratio is now edging down into the 'stabilisation zone', indicating that milk supply growth should normalise although will remain at high levels.

Our forecast for the milk year ahead predicts stabilisation of milk supplies at 13.04 billion litres which is a scant 0.1% higher than this year. However, we have to keep in mind that we are annualising against a year of record highs, meaning there will still be a lot of milk available.

- Smaller herds but bigger yields to continue
- War in the Middle East presents a significant risk to the forecast

- The growth momentum is likely to continue in the first half of the milk year but will likely slowdown in the second half as we annualise against high levels to end the year mostly stable

Milk composition has been well above average all year as well with the latest butterfat at 4.43% and protein at 3.49% in February, well above the 5-year average.

The GB milking herd totalled 1.60 million head as of January 2026, the lowest in a decade and a 1.3% decline from the same month the previous year with a decline across all age groups with the exception of 4–6-year-olds.

Dairy cow kill is up by 4% when comparing the latest 6-month period (Sep-Feb) to the same period of the year prior. This equates to a further 8,000 head of dairy cattle culled. Cows being culled are likely weaker producers or barren. Dairy farmers should consider heifer replacement costs and availability when making culling decisions for the year ahead.

While dairy cull cow numbers have grown in recent months, we have seen the market absorb this supply without weighing on overall cow prices, in part due to reduced numbers from the suckler herd holding total supply below year-ago levels.

GB organic milk deliveries have continued to recover since the nadir in production seen last year and production was up by 9.3% for Q1.

Global milk production averaged 850.5 million litres per day in January, an increase of 40.9 million litres per day (+5.1%) across the selected regions, compared to the same period in the previous year. All regions recorded growth with the EU and US the biggest contributors.

US rose by 3.3% driven by herd size, disease recovery and a boost to cheese production facilities, and NZ by 2%. Australia grew by 1.5%. Latin America continued to see strong growth through 2025.

The EU maintained its strong growth (+5.2%). Germany was up most: 186 million litres (+7%) for the month of January, followed by France, up 118 million litres (+5.8%), and Italy, up 83 million litres (+7.6%).

According to Rabobank, milk production growth among the 'Big 7' exporters is forecast to slow to 0.2% in 2026, down from 2.6% in 2025, with a slight contraction expected in early 2027.

Trade: UK dairy export volumes in Q4 2025 grew by 28% in Q4 2025 to 367,000 tonnes with value increasing by 13% to £551 million. UK dairy exports continued to rise for the third quarter in a row. Shipments to EU countries increased by 68,600 tonnes, and exports to non-EU countries rose by 11,800 tonnes.

Most categories grew in both volume and value, except whey and whey products

Imports fell by 1.5%, mainly due to reduced imports of butter and of milk and cream

Growth was driven mainly by:

- Milk and cream (up 56,800 tonnes)
- Milk powders (up 14,000 tonnes)
- Cheese (up 7,900 tonnes)
- Butter (up 3,200 tonnes)

Demand: During the 12 weeks ending 21 March 2026, volumes of cows' dairy fell into decline, down 0.2% year-on-year. Spend on cows' dairy increased by 5.0% year-on-year, driven by a 5.2% increase in average retail prices despite farmgate prices decreasing (NIQ Homescan POD, Total GB, 12 w/e 21 March 2026).

- **Cow's milk** saw a 1.6% decline in volume purchased year-on-year. Whole milk volumes grew, while skimmed and other cow's milk declined.
- **Cows cheese** saw a 1.9~~5~~% volume growth, with spend growing 3.1%, driven by increased volumes and an average 1.1% increase in prices.
- **Cheddar** volume declined 0.5% but still accounts for 45% of cow cheese volume.
- **Cows' butter** saw a 0.9% decrease in volumes purchased year-on-year.
- **Cows' yogurt, yogurt drinks and fromage frais** volumes continue to see growth (+6.6%), with spend increasing 8.6% year-on-year.
- **Cows' cream** volumes remained in growth, up 2% year-on-year, with an 7.8% increase in average prices paid leading to an 9.9% increase in spend.

Beef sector update

Beef Sector

Prices: GB deadweight prime prices dropped from the previous quarter, with the all-prime price reaching 634 pence per kilogram (p/kg) the week ending 28 March 2026. This was a 12p/kg drop compared to the week ending 26 December 2025. This price down 45p/kg on the same week 2025, but up 146p/kg on the same week 2024. Cow prices rose through Q4, in the week ending 28 March cull cow price reached 527p/kg, up 25p/kg year on year.

Production: Q1 beef production totalled 226,500 tonnes, down 8,500 tonnes on the previous quarter, up 3,600 tonnes on the year before. Prime cattle slaughter totalled 501,200 head, while cow slaughter numbers were down 2% on the year to 146,000 head. UK prime carcasses weights were up 3% on the year, averaging 353.7kg.

Trade: Fresh and frozen beef imports for the first 3 months of 2026 reached 59,000 tonnes, up 2% on Q1 2025. All beef imports including offal and processed plus corned reached 75,500 tonnes, up 3% YoY. Total exports were up 14% YoY to 36,000 tonnes, while fresh and frozen beef exports were up 18% totalling 29,500 tonnes.

Demand: Beef retail over Q1 saw an 8.8% increase in spend, driven by average prices rising 16.4%, decreasing volumes by a total of 6.5%. Primary beef volume saw a 9.1% decline in sales, while mince saw an 8.2% volume reduction year-on-year, driven by a reduction in volumes purchased per shopper period (Worldpanel by Numerator, 12 w/e 22 March 2026).

Acknowledgment for the dairy and beef updates: Molly Corbett, AHDB.

Bluetongue updates

The 2025 to 2026 vector season started on the 1 July 2025. Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of confirmed bluetongue (BTV) cases between 1 July 2025 and 17 April 2026. These interactive maps can be found here: Bluetongue Cases and Zones.

During Q1 2026 there were at least 44 confirmed cases of BTV in cattle. Examples of the clinical signs reported for confirmed cases in this quarter are shown in Table 1. The most common clinical sign reported was ‘dummy’ calves. The presenting signs for these include blindness, stargazing, passive demeanour, difficulty standing, and a wide-based stance. Twelve of the 44 herds (27%) reported abortions. Further detail on these cases can be found on this webinar: Bluetongue virus Vet webinar - 29 April - Ruminant Health & Welfare. The brain lesions are described in this letter in the Veterinary Record: Brain lesions in BTV-3-positive calves in England : The Veterinary Record and this recent focus article: Congenital brain lesions in calves caused by bluetongue virus serotype 3 infection.

Images of the clinical signs can be found here: Clinical signs of bluetongue | AHDB

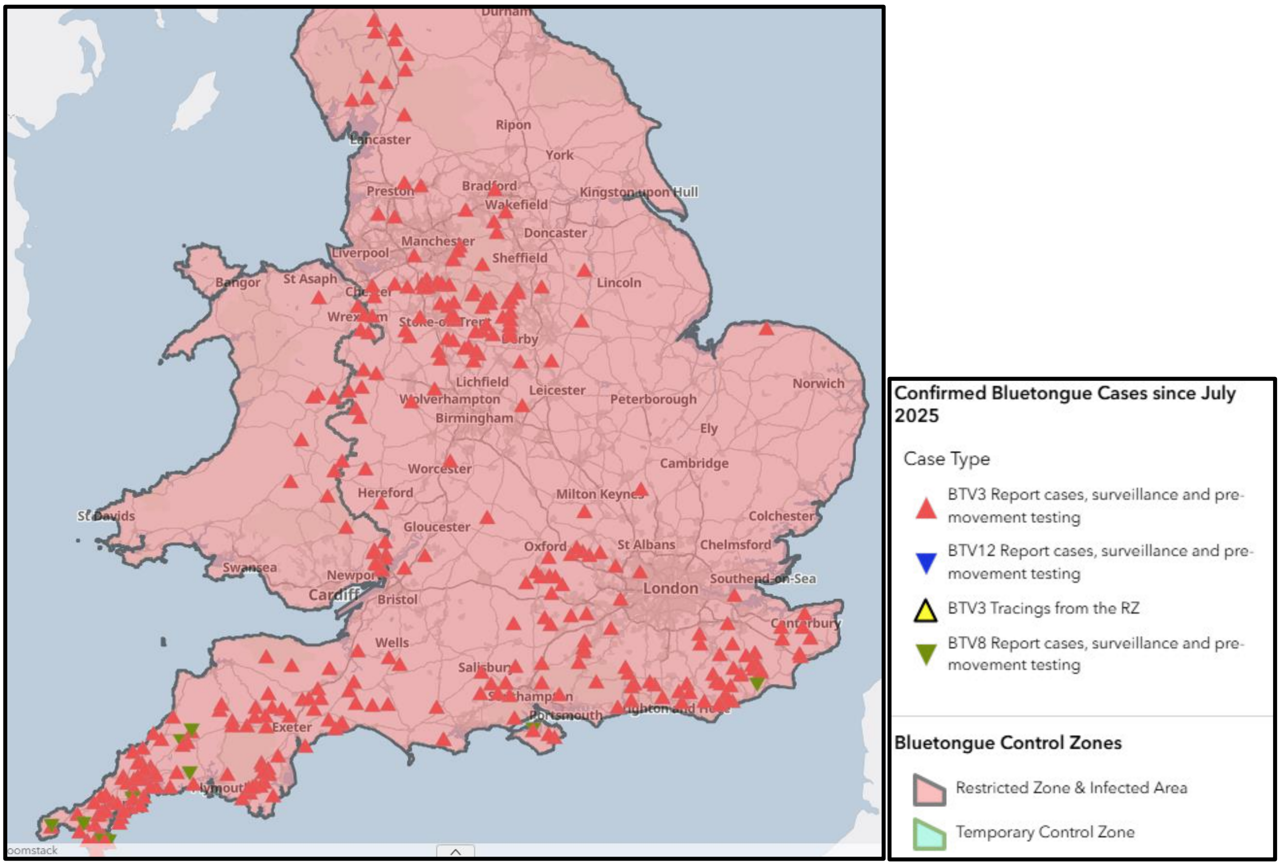

Figure 1: Map of England and Wales showing the confirmed bluetongue cases between 1 July 2025 and 17th April 2026

Table 1: Examples of the clinical signs reported in 44 of the confirmed BTV cases between January and April 2026

Clinical sign	Number recorded	Percentage of the 44 recent cases
Dummy calf	33	75%
Abortion	12	27%
Reduced fertility/scanning	4	9%
Calf facial deformity	4	9%
Calf nasal discoloration	4	9%

Bluetongue virus is a notifiable disease. Suspicion of bluetongue virus in animals must be reported to the Animal and Plant Health Agency on 03000 200 301 in England, on 03003 038 268 in Wales, and to the local Field Services Office in Scotland. Further guidance and information are available on the Ruminant Health & Welfare site, Bluetongue: information and guidance for livestock keepers (GOV.UK) and on Bluetongue: how to spot and report it (GOV.UK).

Cattle disease surveillance dashboard outputs

The most frequent diagnoses from carcase submissions made in Q1 of 2026, compared to Q1 in 2025, and Q1 for 2015 to 2026 inclusive, through the Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) scanning surveillance network, are illustrated in Table 2. These can be interrogated further using the interactive cattle disease surveillance dashboard which was launched in October 2017: APHA animal surveillance reports, publications and dashboards - GOV.UK. Please see the note in the introduction on Page 2 regarding SRUC data.

Table 2: Great Britain scanning surveillance 10 most frequent carcase submission diagnoses in Q1 of 2026, Q1 of 2025, and Q4 for 2015-2026

10 most frequent carcase diagnoses Q1 2026	10 most frequent carcase diagnoses Q1 2025	10 most frequent carcase diagnoses Q1 2015-2026
1. Pneumonia due to *Mycoplasma bovis*	1. Pneumonia due to *Mycoplasma bovis*	1. Pneumonia due to *Mycoplasma bovis*
2. Cryptosporidiosis	2. Pneumonia due to *Pasteurella multocida*	2. Cryptosporidiosis
3. Pneumonia due to *Pasteurella multocida*	3. Pneumonia due to *Mannheimia haemolytica*	3. Pneumonia due to *Pasteurella multocida*
4. Colisepticaemia	4. Cryptosporidiosis	4. Pneumonia due to *Mannheimia haemolytica*
5. Pneumonia due to *Mannheimia haemolytica*	5. Pneumonia – not otherwise specified	5. Pneumonia – not otherwise specified
6. Abomasal ulceration	6. Pneumonia due to BRSV	6. Hypogammaglobulinaemia
7. Rotaviral enteritis	7. Rotaviral enteritis	7. Pneumonia due to BRSV
8. Hypogammaglobulinaemia	8.	8. Rotaviral enteritis
9. Navel ill with or without joint ill	9. Navel ill +/- joint ill	9. Digestive disease due to other causes (not listed)
10. Pneumonia due to BRSV	10. Digestive disease due to other causes (not listed)	10. Colisepticaemia

New and re-emerging diseases and threats

Changes in disease patterns and unusual diagnoses

Systemic disease

Salmonella update

Most incidents of bovine salmonellae in this quarter arose from clinical disease investigations. There were nine different serovars reported in Q1 2026. S. Dublin was the most commonly reported, accounting for over 60% of all cattle *Salmonella* incidents. Reports of salmonella in livestock, dogs, birds and wildlife in Great Britain can be found on GOV.UK.

Digestive system disease

The most common diagnoses in the digestive system disease category were cryptosporidiosis and rotaviral enteritis, with cryptosporidiosis being the second most common diagnosis for this quarter.

Cryptosporidiosis

Cryptosporidiosis, usually caused by *Cryptosporidium parvum,* is consistently the second most common bovine diagnosis in the Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis (VIDA) database, and the most diagnosed enteric pathogen in neonatal and pre-weaned calves, with many cases reported in the first quarter of 2026. Transmission occurs via the faecal-oral route, and control is challenging due to the parasite's ubiquity, low infectious dose, resistance of oocysts to many disinfectants, and limited treatment options. Although it can be the sole pathogen detected in cases of diarrhoea in calves, it is often diagnosed in conjunction with other enteric pathogens.

Infection with *Cryptosporidium parvum* results in significant production losses and it is an important zoonosis. In all cases, advice on calf management and hygiene to minimise zoonotic risk was given.

Control of calf scour relies on ensuring calves receive sufficient high-quality colostrum, maintaining strict hygiene of housing and feeding equipment, and isolating sick calves to limit environmental contamination. Vaccinating dams can further support control by enhancing protection against key enteric pathogens including cryptosporidiosis.

K99-positive *Escherichia coli* infections in neonatal calves

Enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC) is another important cause of enteritis in calves in the first 1-4 days of life, causing economically significant disease and mortality worldwide. As shown in Figure 2, cases in GB are most often diagnosed in the first quarter of the year, reflecting both the likely increased environmental contamination during the housed period, and increased numbers of neonatal calves at risk in this quarter due to a spring bias to national calving patterns.

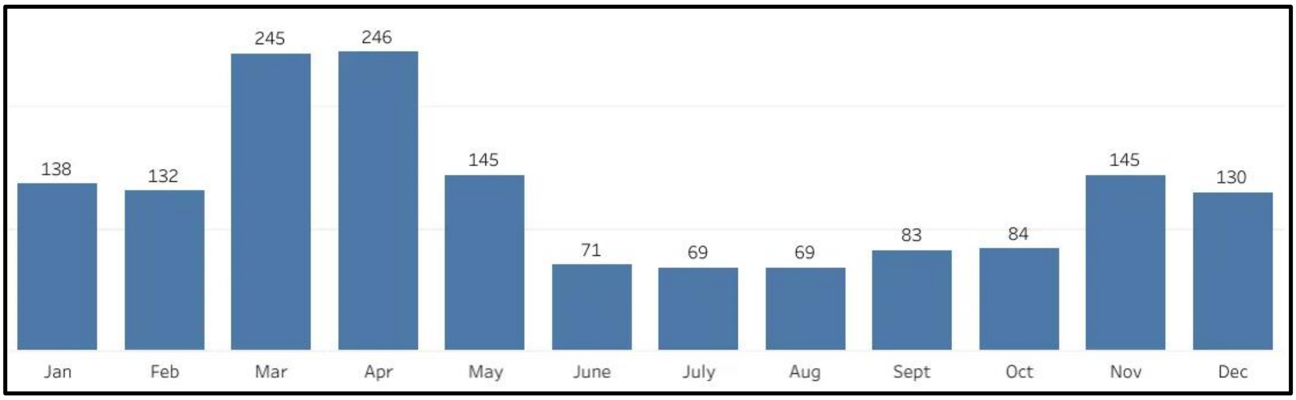

Figure 2: Seasonality of Enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC) diagnoses in neonatal calves in Great Britain for 2015 to 2025

ETEC adhere by their fimbriae (such as K99) to receptors on the villi of the small intestinal mucosa. Enterotoxins are produced which cause reduced absorption and increased secretion of fluid and electrolytes from intestinal crypt cells, leading to watery diarrhoea, severe dehydration and often death.

Abomasal ulceration in weaned cattle

Several cases of abomasal ulceration have been diagnosed in weaned cattle this quarter. The aetiology of abomasal ulcers is not well understood although stress and nutritional factors are likely to be involved. Conditions such as lymphosarcoma, and viral infections such as bovine viral diarrhoea, malignant catarrhal fever may cause erosions of the abomasal mucosa. Ulcers may also be seen in association with abomasal displacement or volvulus.

Omasal and abomasal impaction with right abomasal displacement, abomasal ulceration and peritonitis were detected at postmortem examination (PME) of a late gestation beef heifer in January. She was one of five to die in the previous week with drooling, increased heart and respiratory rates, and absent rumen and gut sounds reported prior to death. The group were housed on straw and until the previous few days had been fed pea straw. Outbreaks of abomasal and omasal impaction in beef animals in late pregnancy during cold weather and with feeding of forage of low quality are described in the literature and are sporadically diagnosed in APHA and SRUC. Increased energy requirements during cold weather and late pregnancy raise the overall energy needs and the amount of roughage ingested; chopping of roughage can also increase intakes. Indigestibility of the roughage results in impaction. An outbreak of omasal and abomasal impaction in UK beef cows being fed pea-straw has previously been described (Simkins and Nagele, 1997).

Reference:

Simkins K.M. and Nagele M.J. (1997) Omasal and abomasal impaction in beef suckler cows. Vet Rec, 141: 466-468.

Concurrent disease of other systems is also commonly detected, as illustrated by fatal haemorrhage due to abomasal ulceration seen in a 6-year-old dairy cow at 70 days-in-milk. The cow presented with haemorrhagic diarrhoea and malaise 6 days after treatment for suspected coliform mastitis. At postmortem examination, the buccal mucosa was white, and a large quantity of clotted blood was seen in the abdominal cavity. There were further clots and dark red content in the abomasum: two large, full thickness ulcers were found, one in the abomasal body and one in the pyloric antrum, along with three smaller, shallower ulcers. The liver was enlarged and fatty, and the cow was reported to have rapidly lost body condition since calving. A review of dry and fresh cow nutrition and management was advised.

Liver fluke bulk milk serology

Figure 3 shows the proportion of National Milk Records (NMR) bulk milk samples testing positive for liver fluke antibody, by ELISA, by country, from Q1 2020 to Q4 2025 inclusive. In some cases, samples are not geo-referenced. They are included in the GB total only, and as such the percentage positive by country may not equate to the GB percentage positive. Figure 4 shows this by NUTS 1** region for England for the same period (**Nomenclature des Unités territoriales statistiques (NUTS) provides continuity with the UK's statistical framework for regional and local data in an international context).

This data is kindly provided under agreement from National Milk Records (NMR) to support the collection of disease surveillance information across GB. NMR provide milk testing for endemic disease in cattle. Most of the bulk milk samples tested will be routine quarterly surveillance ('monitoring') and a few may be part of a clinical disease investigation ('diagnostic'), but these are not differentiated in Figure 3. In line with agreed APHA reporting, the number of samples tested is not shown. For further information on this data please contact vetenquiries@nmrp.com.

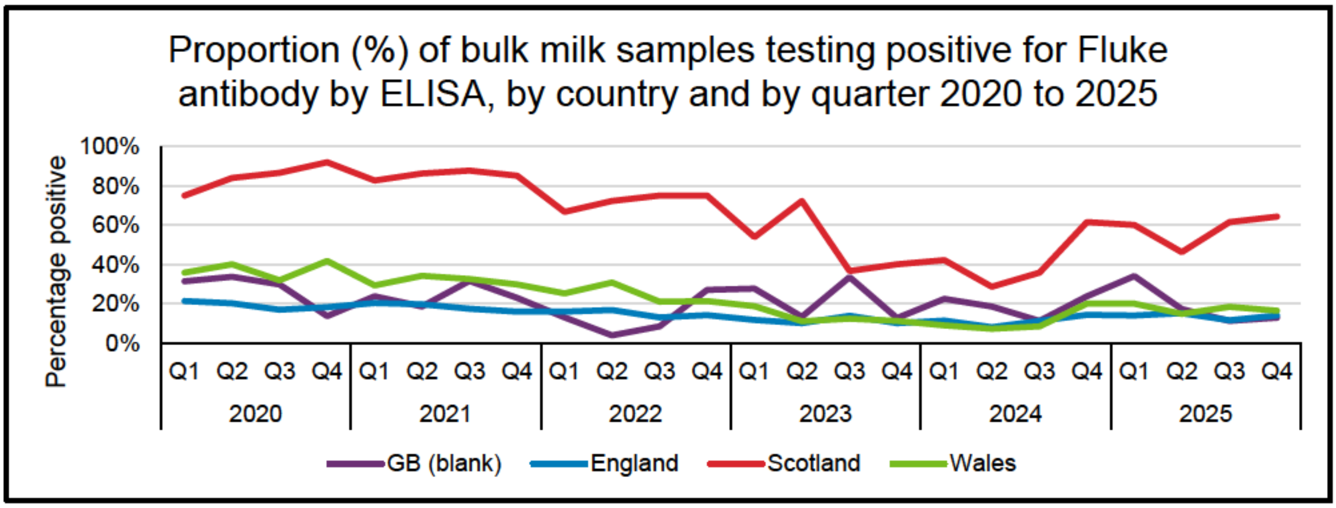

Figure 3: Proportion (%) of bulk milk samples testing positive for liver fluke antibody by ELISA, by country, and by quarter Q1 2020 to Q4 2025* (*to date)

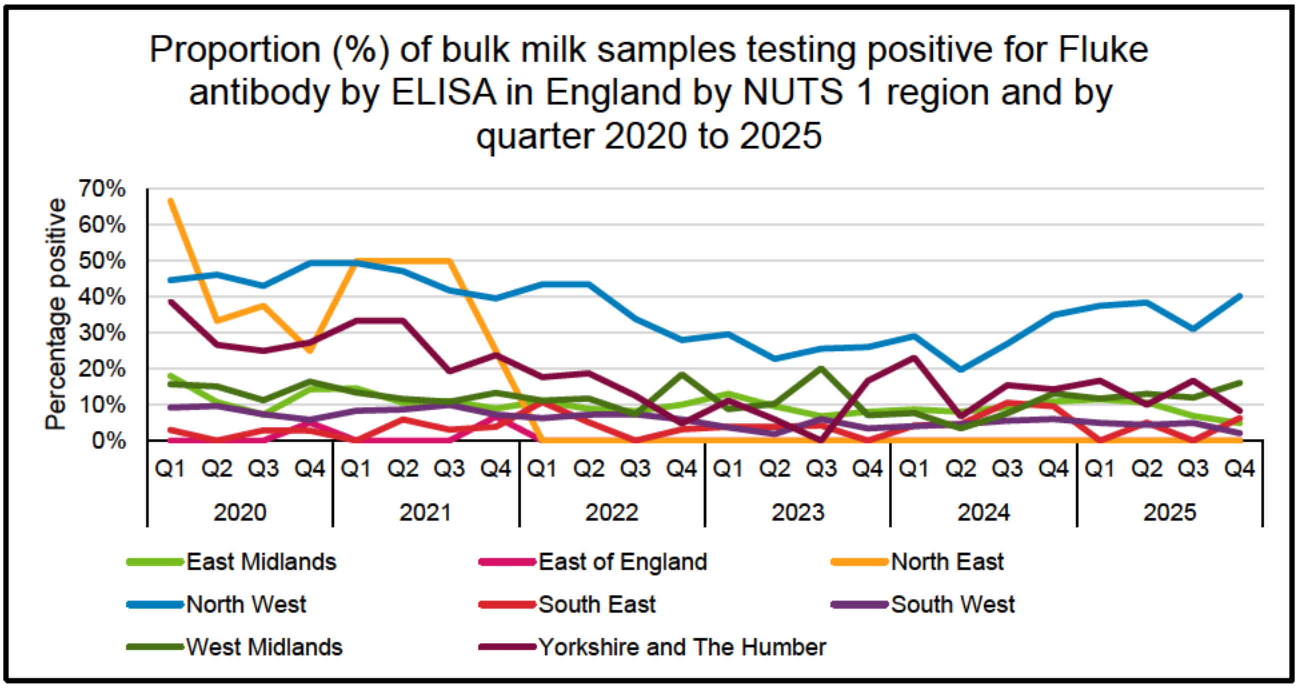

Figure 4: Proportion (%) of bulk milk samples testing positive for liver fluke antibody by ELISA, by NUTS 1 region in England, and by quarter Q1 2020 to Q4 2025* (*to date)

Acknowledgements for the liver fluke data: Eamon Watson MRCVS, NMR Product Manager and Karen Bond MRCVS, NMR Veterinary Team Lead

Respiratory system

Pneumonias due to *Mycoplasma bovis*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Mannheimia haemolytica*, and BRSV were in the Top 10 diagnoses for Q1 2026, with pneumonia due to *M. bovis* being the most common diagnosis for the quarter.

Bovine Respiratory Complex in a fattening steer

A 31-month-old bullock was submitted to Carmathen VIC for postmortem examination following a period of illness and respiratory signs of two weeks duration. The submitted animal was euthanised due to poor prognosis, having been clinical examined and found to be weak and open mouth breathing. Five of 10 animals had been affected and died over an 8-week period; and another six animals had high fevers (41ºC) and respiratory signs when the submitted animal was examined. Cattle group turnover on the holding was high, with mixed breeds and ages (ranging 12 months – 3 years) in this finishing store unit.

Postmortem examination revealed extensive pneumonia, and lesions were highly suggestive of *Mycoplasma bovis* (Figures 5 and 6*)*. Testing confirmed the presence of *M. bovis* in addition to bacterial pneumonia caused by *Histophilus somni, Pasteurella multocida,* and *Trueperella pyogenes.*

The lung lesions were histopathologically typical of *Mycoplasma bovis*, superinfected by Pasteurellaceae. Prior viral insult was not indicated either on testing or histopathology but, given the history of mixing animals of different ages and origins, respiratory viruses may well have been involved at a herd level, and further investigation was warranted.

Figure 5: View of left lung lobes showing cranio-ventral consolidation and intralobular emphysema of dorsal/caudal lobes.

Figure 6: Cut surface of affected areas of lung with *Mycoplasma bovis* lesions

Outbreak of severe Mannheimiosis in a dairy herd

Mannheimia haemolytica is a recognised primary pathogen in outbreaks of respiratory disease in dairy herds (Biesheuvel et al, 2021; Het Lam, 2025). Outbreaks occur sporadically and it can be unclear as to the inciting factor, as demonstrated in the following case.

Several cows either died or were euthanised and submitted to investigate a severe outbreak of respiratory disease in a dairy herd. Whilst a significant proportion of the herd showed clinical signs, the case fatality rate was much lower. However, it was not possible to predict which cows were likely to progress to severe disease. The 3.5-year-old cow depicted below, euthanised by injection and submitted for postmortem examination, had gross findings consistent with previously examined animals: severe and diffuse fibrinous pleurisy, extensive consolidation of the lung parenchyma, and marked fibrinous expansion of the interlobular tissues in the left lung (Figure 7). A heavy growth of predominantly *Mannheimia haemolytica* was cultured from the lung, confirming the suspected diagnosis of acute Mannheimiosis.

Figure 7: Section through the left lung of the same cow showing thickening of the interlobular spaces with fibrin

Further testing, for potential underlying or concurrent respiratory pathogens IBR, PI3, BRSV, pathogenic *Mycoplasma* spp., Influenza D, and bovine respiratory coronaviruses, did not identify any organisms that might have contributed to the onset of disease. Testing for Tick Borne Fever and copper loading, both potential immunosuppressants, were negative. Vaccination was recommended for unaffected cows and replacements joining the herd.

References:

Biesheuvel, M.M., van Schaik, G., Meertens, N.M., Peperkamp, H.H., van Engelen, E. & van Garderen, E. (2021) Emergence of fatal *Mannheimia haemolytica* infections in cattle in the Netherlands. *The Veterinary Journal*. *268*, 105576,

Het Lam, J., Veldhuis, A. M. B., van Engelen, E., van Garderen, E., Bisschop, I., Pardon, B., & Schukken, Y. H. (2025). Characterization of *Mannheimia haemolytica* pleuropneumonia outbreaks in Dutch dairy cattle: A case referent study. *Journal of Dairy Science*, *108*(9), 10084-10098.

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) gE bulk milk serology

Figure 8 shows the proportion of National Milk Records (NMR) bulk milk samples testing positive for IBR gE antibody (used for herds vaccinating with a gE deleted IBR vaccine), by ELISA, by country, from Q1 2020 to Q4 2025 inclusive. In some cases, samples are not geo-referenced. They are included in the GB total only and as such the percentage positive by country may not equate to the GB percentage positive.

This data is kindly provided under agreement from National Milk Records (NMR) to support the collection of disease surveillance information across GB. NMR provide milk testing for endemic disease in cattle. Most of the bulk milk samples tested will be routine quarterly surveillance ('monitoring') and a few may be part of a clinical disease investigation ('diagnostic'), but these are not differentiated in Figure 8. The values indicate a high level of, and widespread, IBR exposure in England, Scotland, and Wales. In line with agreed APHA reporting, the number of samples tested is not shown. For further information on this data please contact vetenquiries@nmrp.com.

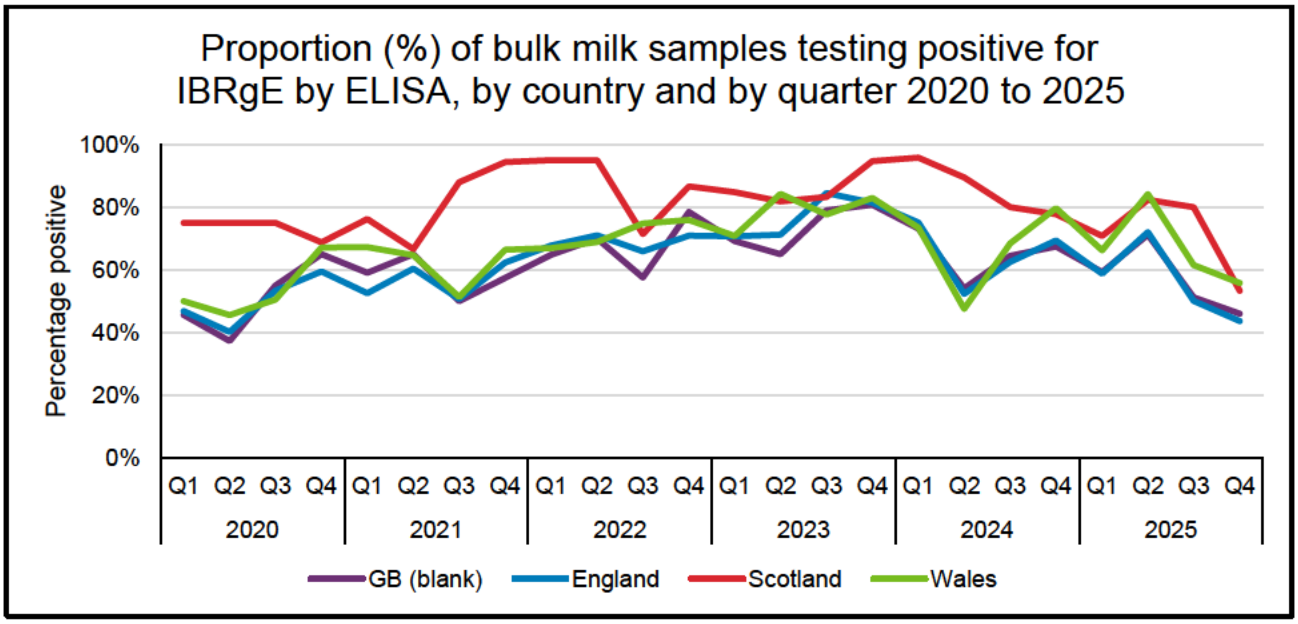

Figure 8: Proportion (%) of bulk milk samples testing positive for IBRgE antibody by ELISA by country and by quarter Q1 2020 to Q4 2025* (*to date)

Acknowledgements for the IBR data: Eamon Watson MRCVS, NMR Product Manager and Karen Bond MRCVS, NMR Veterinary Team Lead

Musculoskeletal system

Malignant oedema in a red poll cow

A mature red poll suckler cow was found unexpectedly dead. The small group were at grass and fed supplementary straw and silage. The carcase was severely bloated and malodorous. Over the shoulder and neck there was extensive haemorrhage and oedema, and the underlying muscle was very dark with a region that appeared dry. Blackleg was suspected and fluorescent antibody tests (FATs) were actioned on impression smears of the dried muscle. *Clostridium novyi* type B was detected in two areas tested, whereas *C. chauvoei* and *C. septicum* were not. *C. chauvoei* is the agent of blackleg and has predilection for muscle tissue. *C. novyi* is most associated with infectious necrotic hepatitis, also known as black disease, but it can also be implicated in malignant oedema, and *C. novyi* type A can cause 'pseudoblackleg'. In all these conditions, proliferation may be triggered by contamination of wounds, or activation of clostridial spores already in the muscle, for example by localized trauma or injections.

Urinary system

No significant trends this quarter.

Nervous system and organs of special sense

Histophilus somni meningoencephalitis

Histophilus somni meningoencephalitis was diagnosed in an eight-month-old beef calf. The calf was from a group of 140 individuals which had been recently moved onto new pasture and fed kale and silage. Postmortem examination was conducted on farm, on two other calves from the same group, and suspicion of lung pathology was raised. The group had been vaccinated for respiratory and Clostridial pathogens. On presentation to the private veterinary surgeon, the calf was described as circling, prior to recumbency, with a head tilt and opisthotonus. Prior to euthanasia by barbiturate injection, the calf was treated with long-acting penicillin and dexamethasone.

Postmortem examination was largely unremarkable, with some minor lung pathology noted affecting the cranial and middle lobes. No fluorescence was observed on the brain under ultra-violet light. No bacterial growth was observed on aerobic or Listeria-specific culture from various tissues. A worm egg count of 6,450 eggs per gram was noted. Beta hydroxy butyrate from aqueous humour was within normal limits. Magnesium from aqueous humour was reduced but not sufficiently low to be consistent with hypomagnesaemia. Bovine respiratory syncyntial virus (RSV) and *Anaplasma phagoycytophilum* were identified by PCR. Ovine herpes virus 2 was not detected.

Gross examination of cut sections of fixed brain tissue revealed bilateral areas of haemorrhage and malacia in the corpus striatum and mid-brain. Histological examination demonstrated a severe, multifocal, symmetrical necrotising encephalopathy with fibrinoid necrosis, thrombosis of vessels and lytic neutrophil infiltrates. However, no bacteria or fungi were evident on gram or Period Acid-Schiff (PAS) stains. *Histophilus somni* was identified by real-time multiplex PCR with a low cycle threshold value and was deemed the causative agent of the meningoencephalitis. Advice around general hygiene and calf management was given to reduce risk of transmission of *H. somni* between groups. It is possible that both or either of the BRSV and the *Anaplasma phagoycytophilum* could have predisposed the animal to the meningoencephalitis or, increased the severity of the *Histophilus somni* infection.

Louping ill in a heifer

Louping ill was diagnosed in a pregnant 18-month-old heifer on a mid-Wales suckler farm with 60 cows, the only animal affected in a group of 20. It had been circling with its head turned to the same side. The heifer became recumbent, though was not considered to be blind, and developed paddling and inability to remain on its sternum. There was no response to amoxycillin and NSAID treatment and the animal was euthanased using barbiturate. Louping-ill was confirmed by histopathological examination of the brain, which identified a non-suppurative encephalomyelitis; immunohistochemistry indicated strong labelling for louping-ill virus. Positive serology can support a suspected diagnosis in clinically affected animals, although in this case the heifer was seronegative.

Louping-ill is diagnosed in three main areas of England and Wales: in parts of Cumbria, mid and north Wales, and on Dartmoor and Exmoor. It is less commonly diagnosed in cattle compared with sheep; disease can also occur in horses, pigs, dogs, South American camelids, and red grouse. Infection by Louping-ill virus (a flavivirus) is transmitted by *Ixodes ricinus* ticks and causes an initial viraemia, followed by encephalomyelitis. Varying neurological signs occur including a changed gait, paralysis, blindness, fitting and muscle tremor before animals become recumbent and die. Not all infected animals develop clinical signs and other stressors such as exercise can increase the proportion of affected animals. Rapid progression of clinical disease and heavy losses can occur in naïve animals which are introduced to tick-infested land, and particularly if there is also tick-borne fever (infection by *Anaplasma phagocytophilum*).

There is currently no vaccine for louping ill, although the Moredun Institute is hoping to launch one soon (see below). Acaricides are commonly used on at-risk animals on farms where ticks have been identified. In humans louping-ill virus infection can also rarely cause severe brain and spinal cord inflammatory pathology. Flu-like symptoms may initially occur followed by signs of CNS infection. Although the greatest risk for humans is through bites from infected ticks, there is also potential for infection to be acquired from carcases through accidental cuts made with surgical instruments, or by injection, or from aerosols. Infection can also be transmitted to people through drinking contaminated raw milk.

https://moredun.org.uk/news/foundation/moreduns-louping-ill-vaccine-campaign-featured-on-bbc-scotlands-landward-programme#:~:text=The%20institute%20has%20developed%20a,manufacturer%20and%20scale%20up%20production.

Skin disease

No significant trends this quarter.

Circulatory disease

Septic endocarditis in a dairy cow

The carcase of an adult dairy cow was submitted with a two-month history of pyrexia, epistaxis, anorexia, and stiffness, resulting in eventual death. Postmortem examination identified severe septic endocarditis of the mitral, tricuspid, and aortic valve leaflets with evidence of embolic spread of infectious emboli to the kidneys. *Streptococcus dysgalactiae spp. dysgalactiae* was isolated on culture of the valve leaflets. A chronic active infection, leading to sustained or recurrent bacteriaemia, was proposed as a necessary factor for the development of an endocarditis lesion. These are often elsewhere in the body and as in this case they have often resolved at the time of presentation.

Portocaval thromboembolism in a dairy cow

We continue to diagnose portocaval thromboembolism across the surveillance network. It was the cause of death in an adult dairy cow which displayed respiratory signs prior to death, one of two affected in a herd of 560 animals. There were extensive liver abscessation and fibrinous adhesions to the diaphragm, which raised the suspicion of previous ruminal acidosis events, or a tyre wire injury as the inciting cause. Areas of lung consolidation were also present which may have contributed to the clinical signs however, the cause of these was not determined due to the effect of autolysis on bacterial cultures.

Reproductive system – abortion, stillbirth, and congenital deformities

The most frequent diagnoses from abortion and stillbirth submissions made in the first quarter (Q1) of 2026, compared to Q1 in 2025, and Q1 for 2015 to 2026 inclusive, through the Great Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) scanning surveillance network, are illustrated in Table 3. These can be interrogated further using the interactive cattle disease dashboard: APHA animal surveillance reports, publications and dashboards - GOV.UK

Table 3: Great Britain scanning surveillance 10 most frequent abortion and stillbirth submission diagnoses in Q1 of 2026, Q1 of 2025, and Q1 for 2015-2026

10 most frequent abortion diagnoses Q1 2026	10 most frequent abortion diagnoses Q1 2025	10 most frequent abortion diagnoses Q1 2015-2026
1. Fetopathy diagnosis not listed	1. Fetopathy due to *Trueperella pyogenes*	1. Fetopathy diagnosis not listed
2. Fetopathy due to *Trueperella pyogenes*	2. Fetopathy diagnosis not listed	2. Fetopathy due to *Trueperella pyogenes*
3. Fetopathy due to *Bacillus licheniformis*	3. Fetopathy due to *Bacillus licheniformis*	3. Fetopathy due to *Bacillus licheniformis*
4. Fetopathy due to fungi	4. Fetopathy due to *Neospora* infection	4. Fetopathy due to *Neospora* infection
5. Fetopathy due to *Salmonella* Dublin	5. Fetopathy due to fungi	5. Fetopathy due to fungi
6. Fetopathy due to E. coli	6. Fetopathy due to *Listeria*	6. Fetopathy or stillbirth due to congenital abnormality
7. Fetopathy due to *Listeria*	7. Fetopathy or stillbirth due to congenital abnormality	7. Fetopathy due to *Listeria*
8. Fetopathy or stillbirth due to congenital abnormality	8. Fetopathy due to Schmallenberg	8. Fetopathy due to *Salmonella* Dublin
9. Fetopathy due to Campylobacter	9. Fetopathy due to IBR/IPV	9. Fetopathy with BVD detected in the fetus
10. Fetopathy due to *Neospora* infection	10. Fetopathy due to *Salmonella* Dublin 10. Stillbirth due to bradytocia	10. Fetopathy due to E. coli

Trueperella pyogenes abortion in a spring block calving herd

Two aborted fetuses were submitted to investigate seven abortions within a week in a 500-cow spring block calving herd. Affected animals were a mixture of housed cows and others which were outside on fodder and bales. A heavy pure growth of *Trueperella pyogenes* was isolated from the fetal stomach contents of one fetus. The herd vaccinated against IBR, BVD and Leptospirosis, there was no gross pathology and no other cause of abortion identified on testing. *T. pyogenes* is a recognised cause of sporadic abortion, following bacterial translocation from an infectious focus in the dam, and is not considered to be infectious from cow to cow.

Campylobacteriosis in a dairy heifer

A 6- to 7-month gestation aborted fetus was submitted from a group of heifers in a 700-cow autumn and spring block calving herd. It was the only abortion from the group. There were no gross lesions on postmortem examination but *Campylobacter fetus subsp. venerealis biovar Intermedius* was isolated from fetal stomach contents. The organism is closely related to *C. fetus venerealis* and is similarly spread venereally. Switching to artificial insemination instead of natural service was recommended to control the infection.

Suspected goitre and iodine deficiency in a late abortion case

An aborted fetus, due in six weeks, was received from a 250-cow dairy herd. There had been four late term abortions in the dry cows. The herd vaccinated for BVD, IBR and leptospirosis, and cows were housed on diet of straw and hay. No infectious cause of abortion was identified, though no placenta was available. A noticeable goitre (thyroid 0.08% of fetal bodyweight (BW)) was detected, and iodine deficiency was suspected on histopathological examination. Iodine deficiency is more typically associated with stillbirths and weak calves), so the significance of this was uncertain, but an investigation of the iodine status of late-pregnant cows was recommended.

Perosomus elumbis and Chiari-like malformation in a stillborn calf

A stillborn calf was presented for postmortem at University of Nottingham, with reported hindlimb and spine deformities, and initial suspicion of Schmallenberg virus involvement. It was the only abnormal birth at the time. Both hindlimbs demonstrated severe arthrogryposis (Figure 9). The pelvis was present immediately caudal to the ribs, with a marked reduction of lumbar vertebrae, and no coccygeal vertebrae. In addition to this, an area of alopecia was visible in the lumbar region, suspicious of spina bifida. Upon removal of the skull at the atlanto-occipital joint, where the cranial cervical spinal cord would be expected, the mesencephalon was present instead, with the (hypoplastic) cerebellum and brainstem present within the cranial cervical spinal canal. This appearance is indicative of a type II Arnolid-Chiari-like malformation. The right kidney demonstrated severe, diffuse hydronephrosis, whilst the testes were bilaterally cryptorchid, attached to the caudal poles of the kidneys. With 'pero-' meaning defective, '-soma' body, 'e' absence, and 'lumbis' lumbar region, the term 'Perosomus elumbis' is a deformity with absence/reduction of the caudal parts of the spine, with associated deformities of the hindlimbs. The deformities together are rare, with some data suggesting perosomus elumbis is more common in Holsteins. The calf was negative on PCR testing for Schmallenberg virus and BVD, and the cause of these deformities remains uncertain.

Figure 9: Shortened lumbar spine, no tail, and arthrogryposis in a calf with perosomus elumbis and Chiari-like malformation

Reference

Agerholm JS, Drögemüller C, Steffen DJ, Jacinto JGP. An Overview of Developmental Disorders Leading to Dystocia in Cattle. Reprod Domest Anim. 2025 Sep;60 Suppl 3(Suppl 3): e70083. doi: 10.1111/rda.70083

Genetic osteopetrosis in an aborted Hereford calf

A deformed aborted calf from a pedigree Hereford heifer was submitted for postmortem examination. The affected heifer had been purchased about a year before, and was at approximately 5-6 months of gestation. The aborted calf had marked deformity of all limbs (figure 10), which included shortening of long bones and arthrogryposis. The spine was straight and unremarkable but head, palate and eyes, which are often affected in cases of Schmallenberg infection, could not be examined due to scavenging of tissues. PCR testing for SBV was negative, while dam serology indicated previous exposure to SBV. Histopathology examination of long bones, such as the proximal humerus, tibia, and distal femur, identified osteopetrosis, which was considered most likely of genetic aetiology, as the BVD PCR was negative.

Osteopetrosis encompasses a group of rare disorders characterised by defective osteoclastic bone resorption (characterised by the lack of osteoclasts in this case) and accumulation of primary spongiosa in the bone marrow cavities. This condition has been described in numerous species and commonly affected animals are either aborted or stillborn. In cattle, this condition has been described in several breeds including Herefords (the breed of dam and foetus in this case) but has been best characterised in Angus. In Red Angus it has been demonstrated as a predominantly autosomal recessive disease due to a deletion in the SLC4A2 gene which is involved in a premature apoptosis of osteoclasts.

Figure 10: Deformed limbs in a Hereford fetus with osteopetrosis

Schmallenberg virus serology

Figure 11 shows the proportion of National Milk Records (NMR) bulk milk samples testing positive for Schmallenberg virus (SBV) antibody, by ELISA, by country, from Q1 2020 to Q4 2025 inclusive. This data is kindly provided under agreement from National Milk Records (NMR) to support the collection of disease surveillance information across GB. NMR provide milk testing for endemic disease in cattle. Most of the bulk milk samples tested will be routine quarterly surveillance (‘monitoring’) and a few may be part of a clinical disease investigation (‘diagnostic’), but these are not differentiated in Figure 11. In line with agreed APHA reporting, the number of samples tested is not shown. For further information on this data please contact vetenquiries@nmrp.com.

Notes about Figure 11:

1. Where no samples were tested for SBV in a quarter, this is labelled as NT (not tested) on the graph.

2. Where samples were tested, but with no positive results, these are shown as blank columns on the graph.

3. In some cases, samples are not geo-referenced. They are included in the GB total only and as such the percentage positive by country may not equate to the GB percentage positive.

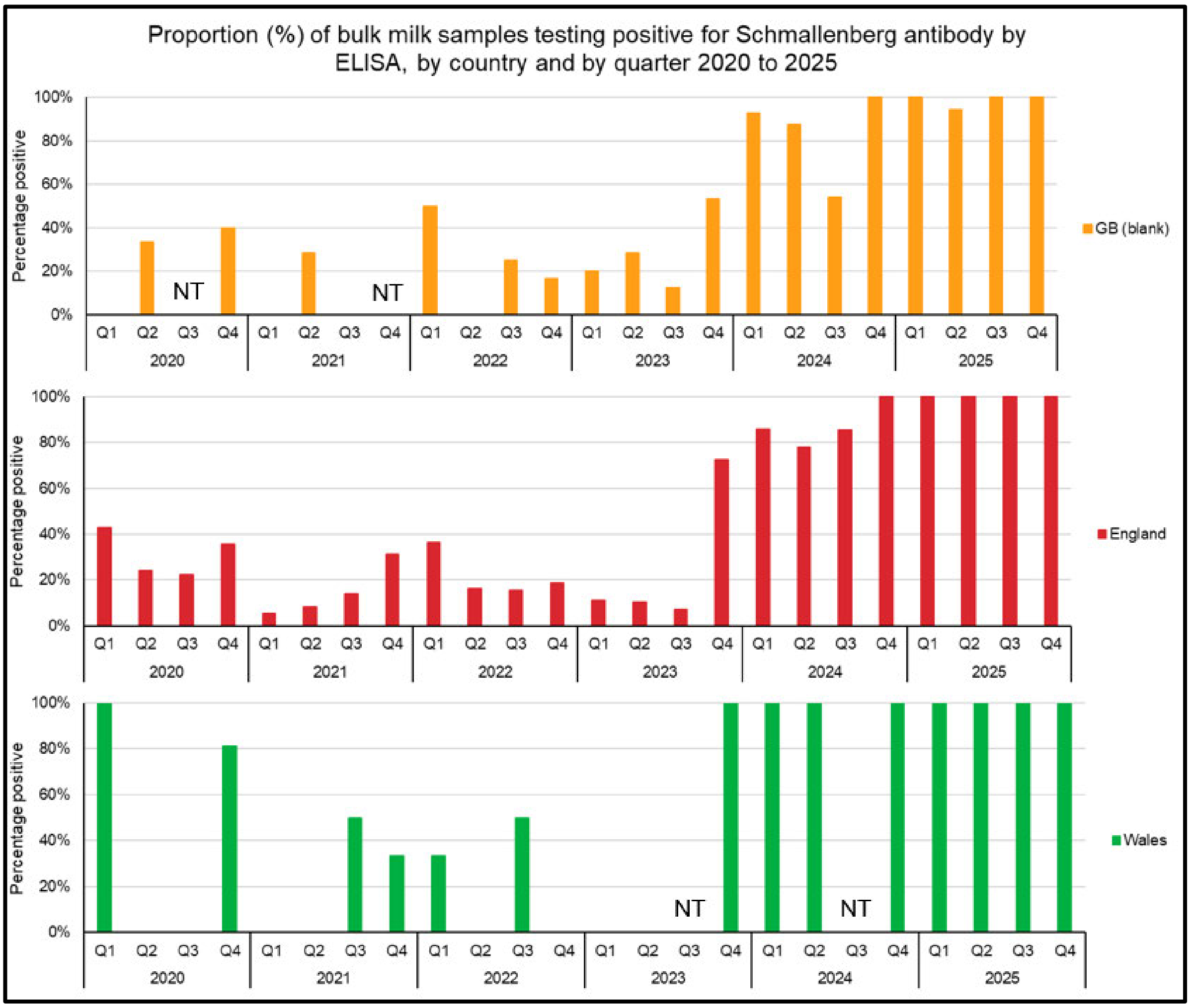

Figure 11: Proportion (%) of bulk milk samples testing positive for SBV antibody by ELISA, by country, and by quarter Q1 2020 to Q4 2025* (*to date)

Acknowledgements for the SBV data: Eamon Watson MRCVS, NMR Product Manager and Karen Bond MRCVS, NMR Veterinary Team Lead

Mastitis

There were no significant trends for this quarter.

Chemical food safety and toxic conditions

Plant toxicity in a group of cows

A group of cows had initially presented with vomiting, ataxia, abdominal pain, and recumbency, and one cow was submitted for postmortem examination. Initial findings were non-specific, including a mild peritoneal cavity effusion, scattered epicardial petechiae, fibrous pleuritis, and pulmonary congestion. On inspection of the rumen contents, partially fragmented stalks, leaves, and seeds were identified, consistent with yew (*Taxus* spp.). Several fragments of green, elliptical leaves were also identified, with a dark green surface, and paler green underside, and a prominent primary vein (Figure 12). Upon further discussion with the submitting vet, these fragments were most likely determined to be rhododendron leaves. Rhododendron and yew toxicities are most commonly associated with improper disposal of garden material. In rhododendrons, grayanotoxins result in persistent activation of voltage dependent sodium channels, resulting in persistent depolarisation of axons, and arrest at the sinoatrial node. The toxic dose in cattle and sheep is considered approximately 0.2% of bodyweight. Clinical signs, if observed, include hypersalivation, abdominal pain, bruxism, vomiting, regurgitation, and others. Yew toxicity is not uncommonly identified, with a toxic dose of approximately 0.5 g per kg BW. All parts of the plant are toxic except for the aril (the fleshy fruit) due to the presence of taxine alkaloids primarily, but other toxins are also present. Taxines are calcium channel antagonists in cardiac myositis, inhibiting condition via the AV node. The most common presentation of yew toxicity is sudden death within a few hours of ingestion, but observed clinical signs may range from depression and ataxia to trembling, weakness, vomiting, seizures, and collapse.

Figure 12: Yew and rhododendron fragments removed from the rumen of a cow that presented with vomiting, ataxia, abdominal pain and recumbency

Reference

Bischoff K, Smith MC. Toxic plants of the Northeastern United States. Vet Clin North Am Food Anim Pract. 2011 Jul;27(2):459-80, x. doi: 10.1016/j.cvfa.2011.02.001. PMID: 21575781.

Antimicrobial use and resistance

The VMD has launched a new digital service for reporting adverse events: [New animal medicine adverse event reporting service launching May 2026 - GOV.UK]

The Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance Sales and Surveillance (UK-VARRS) Report 2024 has recently been published by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD): Veterinary Antimicrobial Resistance and Sales Surveillance 2024 - GOV.UK

In addition, the latest RUMA Targets Task Force report can be found at: Latest RUMA Agriculture Targets Task Force report released – 18 November 2025 – RUMA

The Medicine Hub, a voluntary industry initiative, developed and managed by AHDB, was launched in 2021 and provides a central location for the collection of medicine data, including antibiotic use: Medicine Hub for dairy, beef and sheep farmers | AHDB

Centre of Expertise for Extensively Managed Livestock

The COEEML was developed by APHA to address potential surveillance gaps for extensively managed animals. Extensive management of livestock potentially makes regular or close inspection for disease detection more challenging. The Centre is based at the APHA Veterinary Investigation Centre in Carmarthen; however, it is a Great Britain-wide resource and forms part of the wider veterinary surveillance system operated by APHA. For more details, please see Animal disease scanning surveillance at APHA - GOV.UK.

Horizon scanning

International Disease Monitoring (IDM) horizon-scanning activities monitor for major, notifiable, or new and re-emerging animal disease outbreaks worldwide. This is done to provide an early warning and to assess the risks they may pose to the United Kingdom (UK), particularly for those diseases which impact on animal health and welfare, international trade, public health, or wider society. IDM also assess the risk that animal diseases might come into the UK through the trade in animals or animal products (legal or illegal), through movements of wildlife, or through the movement of fomites and vectors such as insects which may carry infectious disease. These outbreak assessments are used to guide decisions how to manage or reduce the risks and are published on the web: Animal diseases: international and UK monitoring.

Bluetongue virus (BTV) in Europe: Further information can be found at: Bluetongue virus in Europe.

Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease (EHD): Epizootic haemorrhagic disease in Europe

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD):
Recent risk assessments for FMD and other notifiable diseases can be found here :
Animal diseases: international and UK monitoring - GOV.UK
Links to information on differential diagnoses can be found here:
Differential diagnosis of diseases causing oral lesions in cattle - Holliman - 2005 - In Practice - Wiley Online Library

Differential diagnosis of oral lesions and FMD in sheep

Lumpy skin disease (LSD): recent outbreak assessments for LSD in Europe can be found here: Lumpy skin disease in Europe - GOV.UK

Influenza A (H5N1) of avian origin in domestic livestock in the USA

On 25 March 2024, the United States of America (USA) made an immediate notification to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of an outbreak of influenza A of avian origin (H5N1) affecting dairy cattle in Texas. The outbreak strain, a high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) virus strain, belonged to clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype B3.13. This genotype has never been detected outside of the Americas. Further information can be found here: Influenza A (H5N1) infection in mammals: suspect case definition and diagnostic testing criteria - GOV.UK. Details of the national milk testing scheme in the USA can be found here: National Milk Testing Strategy | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

APHA publications of interest

Monthly APHA disease surveillance reports can be found at: APHA disease surveillance monthly reports - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

APHA focus articles in the Veterinary Record can be found at: APHA focus articles in the Veterinary Record - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Emerging and endemic disease alerts can be found at: Alerts for vets: emerging and endemic disease alert system (EEDAS) - GOV.UK

The 2024 edition of the *Salmonella* in animals and feed in Great Britain (previously called *Salmonella* in Livestock Production in GB) has been published and is now available here: Salmonella in animals and feed in Great Britain

SWINSON V; REICHEL R; PITTALIS L; BIDEWELL C; WIGHTON H (2025). Brain lesions in BTV-3-positive calves in England (letter). Veterinary Record 196 (5) 192-193 Brain lesions in BTV-3-positive calves in England : The Veterinary Record

VAN DIEMAN PM; RAMSAY AM; EVERETT HE; HURLEY S; LEAN FZX; NUNEZ A; CALLAWAY R; Lion A; Gaudino M; Secula A; Sikht F-Z; Meyer G; Ducatez MF (2025) Experimental infection of alpacas (Vicugna pacos) with influenza C or D viruses results in subclinical upper respiratory tract disease. Journal of General Virology 106 (12) 002185https://doi.org/10.1099/jgv.0.002185

Jacinto J; Gearing J; Capitan A; ZORLESCU AM; OTTER A; Drogemuller C (2026) LRP4-related lethal syndromic form of syndactyly in Limousin cattle. Animal Genetics 57 (2) e70090 https://doi.org/10.1002/age.70090

Melville LA; Mcgreggor C; JEWELL NJ; MITCHELL S; Watkins C; SWINSON V; Macleod E; Shaw DJ; Bartley DJ (2026). Prevalence and diversity of gastro-intestinal nematode infections in British cattle and implications for biosecurity. Veterinary Parasitology 344, 110749 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vetpar.2026.110749

WIGHTON H; TWOMEY F; MAYERS J; Dewe T; Spalding S (2026). Sharpening our focus on AMR in livestock: the Private Laboratories Initiative. Veterinary Record 198 (5) 215-219. https://doi.org/10.1002/vetr.70471

This publication is available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/animal-disease-surveillance-reports

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at SIU@apha.gov.uk

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.