

Bluetongue in Europe - changes to post import testing requirements (Page published: 29 October 2009)

Purpose

To make livestock keepers and importers aware of the changes to Defra's post import testing requirements for BTV susceptible animals. These changes will take effect from 2nd November 2009.

Background

As from 1st April 2009 all BTV susceptible animals imported into Great Britain from continental Europe and the Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey are subjected to post-import sampling for BTV on two occasions. The first test takes place between 1-3 days after arrival and the second test takes place 7 days after the first test. This testing regime has enabled earlier detection of viraemic animals which may be potentially infectious to resident midge populations and also ensure detection of any animals infected shortly before departure or during transportation.

We have now entered the season in Great Britain when vector activity and onward transmission of BTV via midges is considered low. Defra's post-import testing policy has consequently been revised in consultation with BTV experts, The Devolved Administrations and industry stakeholders.

Action

As from **2 November 2009** all bluetongue susceptible animals imported into Great Britain from continental Europe and the Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey should be post import tested only once, 5-7 days after import.

Any animals imported before the change on 2 November that are due a second test in line with the previous post import testing policy will complete their second test as normal. Imported livestock must remain at the first holding of destination until the negative test results have been received.

Animals imported from The Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland do not require testing for BTV.

We understand that on the few occasions when BT susceptible exotic zoo animals are imported post import testing may pose some safety concerns for both the animals and their handlers. In cases where zoos are expecting imports of BT susceptible exotic animals we would advise that they plan ahead and inform Animal Health in advance. In these cases, taking into account circumstances of import, welfare, health and safety and BTV risks, a decision on post import testing will be taken accordingly.

The post-import testing policy will be further reviewed next year in advance of the period of increased vector activity and amended, if required, according to the risk.

Contact point for Enquiries

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