

Dear Bluetongue Stakeholders

Bluetongue Update February 2010

We are currently working with Defra to consider our Bluetongue policy options 2010. Please find below a brief update of the issues under consideration. We will keep you updated as thinking develops, and would of course welcome your views.

- Surveillance from 2009 suggests there is no evidence of Bluetongue virus circulation last year in GB. However, the insect-born nature of bluetongue means that disease can remain for long periods and GB remains in a full protection zone for BTV8.
- Under EU legislation we are required to provide evidence that there has been no disease circulation for a minimum of 2 years before we are able to declare freedom from disease and remove our zones.
- However, EU rules only enable vaccination within a zone. We would therefore need to be reassured that disease was not likely to come back from continental Europe before we remove the zone and stop vaccinating
- The large numbers of livestock imported into GB each year pose a potential threat as animals are allowed to move freely between confluent BTV8 zones
- We are currently considering whether it would be possible and desirable to change our status to 'lower risk zone' for BTV8. This would allow us maintain vaccinating while also putting in place additional measures to protect ourselves from the risk of importing animals which may be carrying disease.
- The key implications for this would be that *imports into GB from other Bluetongue protection zones would need to be made under the conditions of Annex III of Council Regulation (EC) 1266/2007, unless they are moved direct to slaughter.*

We expect the conditions most likely to be used for moves into GB would be:

- vaccination plus 60 day wait
- vaccination plus a test 14 days after onset of immunity
- booster vaccination within time period of immunity

However moves are also allowed if various conditions around natural immunity or vector protection are met – further detail is provided at the annex to this note.

- We are not obliged to make any changes to our zones at this point and can remain in a full BTV8 protection zone until the point at which we apply for disease free status at some time in the future.
- We are currently monitoring the latest risk and science, considering the legal issues, trade implications for industry and the full range of costs and benefits, and discussing our options with the European Commission

- In the next few months we will also be reviewing our post import testing regime in preparation for Spring/Summer when vectors will become more active.
- Livestock keepers are reminded to continue to vaccinate against BTV8 and remain vigilant for signs of disease. Please also carefully consider the risks and check the health and vaccination status of animals when sourcing susceptible animals from abroad

Bluetongue Core Group

‘Annex III conditions’ - Exemptions from the Bluetongue Exit Ban

If GB changes to ‘BTV8 lower risk zone’ status, moves into GB from Bluetongue Protection Zones, (*including* BTV8 protection zones such as the Netherlands and Germany), will need to meet one of the conditions for exemption from the bluetongue exit ban, as referred to in Articles 7(2)(a) and 8(1)(a) of Commission Regulation 1266/2007, and set out in points 1 to 7 of Annex III. The animals must also have been protected against attacks by vectors during transportation to the place of destination.

PROTECTION AGAINST VECTORS

1. The animals were **kept until dispatch** during the seasonally vector-free period defined in accordance with Annex V of 1266/2007, in a bluetongue seasonally-free zone since birth or **for at least 60 days** prior to the date of movement and were **subjected to an agent identification test** with negative results, carried out not earlier than seven days before the date of movement.

The agent identification test shall not be necessary for Member States or regions of a Member State where sufficient epidemiological data, obtained following the implementation of a monitoring programme for a period of not less than three years, substantiate the determination of the seasonally vector-free period defined in accordance with Annex V of 1266/2007.

2. The animals have been **kept until dispatch** protected against attacks by vectors **for a period of at least 60 days prior to the date of dispatch**;

3. The animals have been **kept until dispatch** in a bluetongue seasonally-free zone during the seasonally vector-free period, defined in accordance with Annex V of 1266/2007, or have been **protected against attacks by vectors for a period of at least 28 days** and were **subjected during that period to a serological test** to detect antibodies to the bluetongue virus group, with negative results, carried out at least 28 days following the date of the commencement of the period of protection against attacks by vectors or the seasonally vector-free period;

4. The animals have been **kept until dispatch** in a bluetongue seasonally-free zone during the seasonally vector-free period, defined in accordance with Annex V of 1266/2007, or have been **protected against attacks by vectors for a period of at least 14 days** and were **subjected during that period to an agent identification test**, with negative results, carried out at least 14 days following the date of the commencement of the period of protection against attacks by vectors or the seasonally vector-free period;

VACCINATION

5. The animals **originate from a herd vaccinated** according to a vaccination programme adopted by the competent authority and **the animals have been vaccinated** against the serotype(s) present or likely to be present in an epidemiologically relevant geographical area of origin, the animals are still within the immunity period of time guaranteed in the specifications of the vaccine

approved in the vaccination programme **and the animals meet at least one of the following requirements:**

(a) they have been **vaccinated more than 60 days before the date of movement;**

(b) they have been **vaccinated** with an inactivated vaccine before at least the number of days necessary for the onset of the immunity protection set in the specifications of the vaccine approved in the vaccination programme and were **subjected to an agent identification test**, with negative results, carried out at least **14 days after the onset of the immunity** protection set in the specifications of the vaccine approved in the vaccination programme;

(c) they were **previously vaccinated and they have been re-vaccinated** with an inactivated vaccine **within the immunity period of time** guaranteed in the specifications of the vaccine approved in the vaccination programme;

(d) they were **kept during the seasonally vector-free period**, defined in accordance with Annex V, in a bluetongue seasonally-free zone, **since birth or for a period of at least 60 days before the date of vaccination and** have been **vaccinated** with an inactivated vaccine before at least the number of days necessary for the onset of the immunity protection set in the specifications of the vaccine approved in the vaccination programme.

NATURAL IMMUNITY

6. The **animals have never been vaccinated** against bluetongue and were always **kept in an** epidemiologically relevant geographical **area** of origin **where not more than one serotype was or is present** or likely to be present and:

(a) they were **subjected to two serological tests** to detect antibodies against the bluetongue virus serotype, with positive results; the **first test** must be carried out on samples **taken between 60 and 360 days before the date of movement** and the **second test** being carried out on samples **taken not earlier than seven days before the date of the movement;** or

(b) they were **subjected to a serological test** according to detect antibodies against the bluetongue virus serotype, with positive results; the **test must be carried out at least 30 days before the date of the movement** and the **animals were subjected to an agent identification test**, with negative results, **carried out not earlier than seven days before date of the movement.**

7. The animals have **never been vaccinated** against the bluetongue virus and were **subjected with positive results to two adequate serological tests** able to detect the specific antibodies against all the bluetongue virus serotypes present or likely to be present, in the epidemiologically relevant geographical area of origin, and:

(a) the **first test** must have been **carried out** on samples that were taken **between 60 and 360 days before the date of movement** and the **second test** must have been **carried out** on samples that were taken **not earlier than seven days before the date of movement**; or

(b) the **specific serotype serological test** must have been **carried out at least 30 days before the date of the movement and the animals were subjected to an agent identification test** with negative results, carried out **not earlier than seven days before the date of movement**.

PREGNANT ANIMALS

For **pregnant animals**, at least **one of the conditions set out in points 5, 6 and 7 must be complied with before insemination or mating, or** the condition set out in **point 3 must be complied with**. In case a serological test, as set out in point 3, is carried out, that test shall be carried out not earlier than seven days before the date of movement.

A copy of the Bluetongue Regulations can be found at the following link
<http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2007R1266:20090214:EN:PDF>