



Bluetongue: GB Officially BTV Free

Great Britain (GB) will become officially free from BTV on 5th July 2011. There have been no cases in Britain since 2008, and serological surveillance over two years has not detected any evidence of disease circulation. This allowed the country to set up a Lower Risk Zone which has been in force since June 2010, strengthening our situation against importing the disease and acting as an initial move towards disease freedom. Current risk assessments indicate that the risk of importing BTV is continuing low.

What are the implications of freedom from disease?

1. Vaccination: Current EU legislation forbids BTV vaccination in BTV-free areas. Thus from 5 July 2011 BTV8 vaccination will no longer be permitted in GB.
2. Exports: Animals may now be exported freely from GB without the need for BTV8 vaccination.
3. Imports: For imports from BTV zones, the situation remains the same as when GB was part of a Lower Risk Zone (LRZ)- ie the criteria set out under Annex 3 of EU Regulation 1266/2007 have to be satisfied:
 - a. Vaccination followed by a 60 day wait, or
 - b. Vaccination followed by antigen testing 14 days after the time specified in the vaccine's data sheet for onset of immunity, or
 - c. Previous vaccination followed by booster vaccination within the duration of immunity specified in the vaccine data sheet.
4. Monitoring: GB will continue to carry out post-import testing, on a risk basis - ie based on where a consignment originates from.
5. Vigilance: Although the risk of disease import is low, members are reminded of the importance of reporting suspicion of disease to their local AHVLA office. It is also important to remind clients to import animals responsibly.

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/animaltrade/>

What of vaccination in the future?

The EU intends to amend the BTV legislation to allow vaccination using killed vaccine in BTV free areas, which would then allow farmers to choose to vaccinate or not for commercial reasons (unless a compulsory vaccination scheme comes into force in the face of disease). No date has been set for this, but we understand that it could be considered this year.