

Update on Bluetongue 12 January 2017

Background

Bluetongue is a viral disease of ruminant animals (e.g. cattle, sheep, goats, deer) and camelids and is primarily transmitted by midges (*Culicoides* species). 90-95% of the midge species in Ireland are capable of transmitting bluetongue. In Ireland the period of midge activity and therefore potential spread of bluetongue in the event of its introduction is between March-April and November-December each year.

Situation in France

France has now reported over 50 cases of BTV-4 spread over a number of regions across France, with the majority being reported from Western France in regions adjacent Switzerland. The introduction of BTV-4 to mainland France is now believed to be imported animals from Corsica. Positive animals have been identified during bluetongue surveillance testing, and so far no animals (cattle, sheep nor goats) have shown any clinical signs. It is now unlikely BTV-4 will be eradicated, and as a result a BTV-4/BTV-8 restriction zone has been placed across the whole of mainland France.

The movement and trade of susceptible species from France is still permitted, **provided all animals are correctly vaccinated against BTV-8 and BTV-4**, or are shown to be naturally immune to both virus serotypes, prior to leaving the restriction zone, and the transport vehicle has been treated with a suitable insecticide. Livestock vehicles that transit France or indeed any other BT restricted zone must also be treated with an insecticide in order to protect the animals from attacks by vectors.

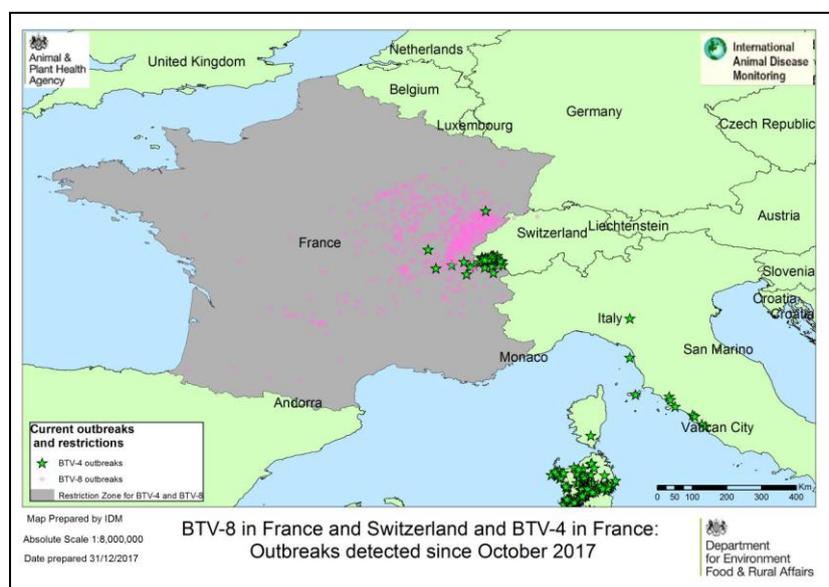


Figure 1. BTV-8 in France and Switzerland and BTV-4 in France. (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672024/btv4-france-update2.pdf)

Risk to Ireland

The importation of bluetongue infected animals represents the biggest risk of the disease entering Ireland.

Farmers, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders should be vigilant and ensure that they are fully aware of the presenting clinical signs of Bluetongue in both cattle and sheep, and that they report any suspicion of disease to their Veterinary Practitioner or Regional Veterinary Office (RVO) without delay. Further information on bluetongue and contact details for RVOs can be found at:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/bluetongue/>

<http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/contact/>

In addition anyone importing ruminant animals into Ireland should be vigilant and consider the following risk mitigation measures:

- Do not import ruminant animals from BT restricted areas unless absolutely necessary
- Only import animals from reputable sources
- Do not buy or accept animals which have been recently imported without carefully checking their origin and avoid importing pregnant animals as they pose an additional BT risk
- Seek additional assurances to ensure that animals are not infected with BT prior to departure, such as a recent negative PCR* test for BT carried out in an accredited laboratory
- Prior to importation contact your RVO for advice and to arrange for prompt testing post importation (note that all susceptible animals coming **from** or **transiting through** a BT restricted area will be sampled and tested for BT within a week of arriving in Ireland)
- Post importation, keep any imported animals isolated and indoors until they have at least been tested for BT by staff from this Department and have returned a negative test result.

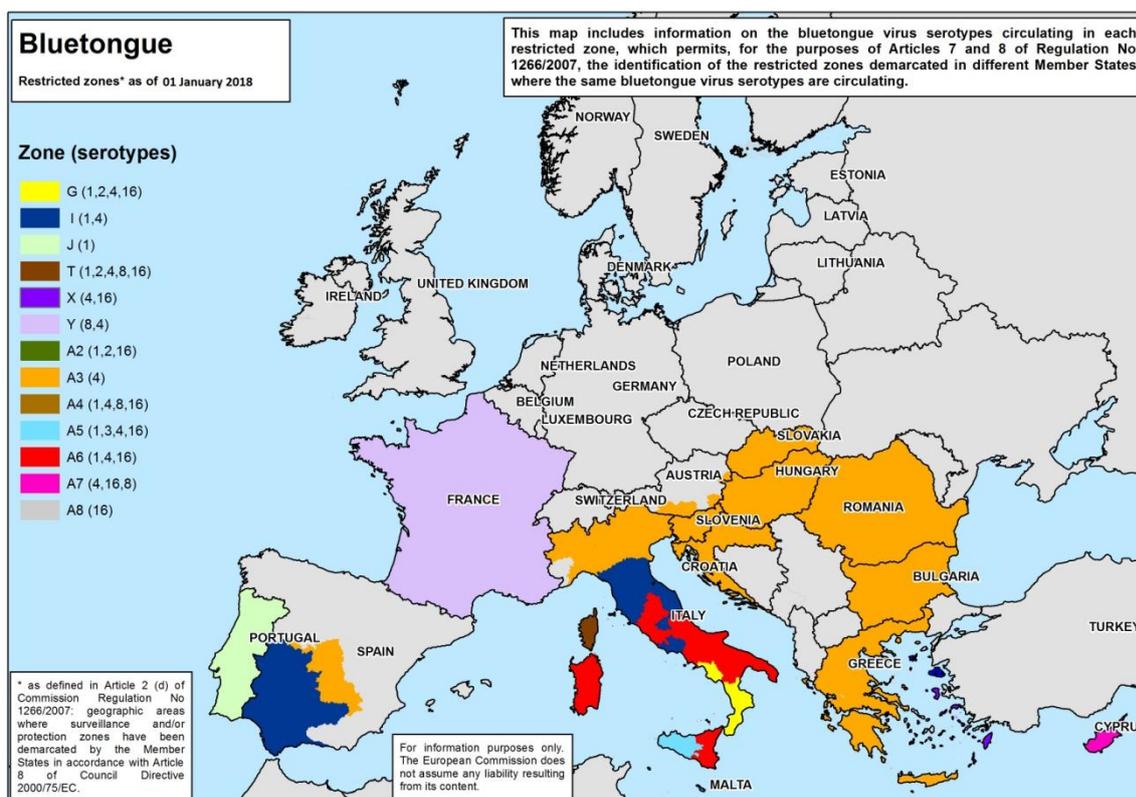


Figure 2. Bluetongue European restriction zones as of 1 January 2018

(https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ad_control-measures_bt_restrictedzones-map.jpg).

Refer to European Commission website for most up to date information:

https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/animal-diseases/control-measures/bluetongue_en

NDCC and Border Inspection Posts Division

12 January 2018