



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine

National Disease Control Centre

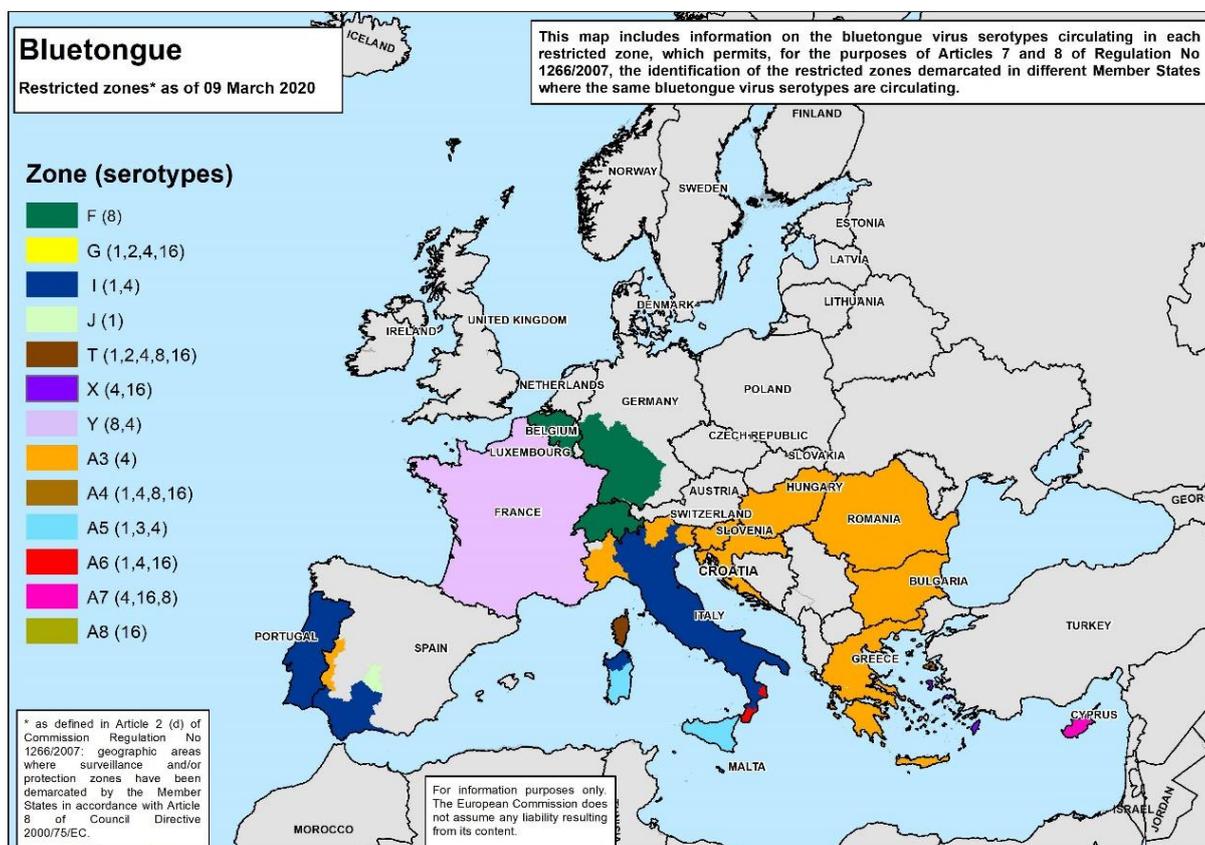
Bluetongue Alert Number 01 of 2020

NDCC Bluetongue Alert Number 1 of 2020

Background

Bluetongue continues to be a disease of ongoing concern in mainland Europe. Many countries/regions continue to be restricted due to the presence of Bluetongue including the whole of France and Belgium and parts of south west Germany. Ireland remains free of Bluetongue and as we enter the high risk period for Bluetongue transmission it is important that we continue to implement measures to keep the disease out, particularly around the importation of ruminant animals from affected countries. The map below shows the distribution of Bluetongue in Europe currently.

Map: Bluetongue restricted zones in Europe as of 9th March 2020.



For regularly updated maps see: https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ad_control-measures_bt_restrictedzones-map.jpg

Further detail on Bluetongue in Europe

2019

A total of 489 outbreaks of Bluetongue were reported in mainland Europe during 2019. These are broken down as follows:



Table summarising BT outbreaks 2019

Country:	No. of outbreaks:	Bluetongue serotype:
Belgium	12	BTV 8
France	256	BTV 4, 8
Germany	59	BTV 8
Greece	32	BTV 4
Italy	74	BTV 1, 4, 16
Spain	1	BTV 4
Switzerland	53	BTV 8
Cyprus	2	BTV 16

2020

- In January 2020, there were outbreaks of Bluetongue in cattle in Switzerland (BTV 8), Belgium (BTV 8), Italy (BTV 4), Spain (BTV 4) and France (BTV 8). Greece had an outbreak of BTV 16 in goats.
- In February Belgium confirmed another outbreak of BTV 8 in cattle and Italy reported further outbreaks of BTV 4 in cattle and buffalo and an outbreak of BTV 1 in cattle. There were also outbreaks of BTV 4 in cattle and goats on the island of Sardinia.
- In March, Belgium and Switzerland reported outbreaks of BTV 8 in cattle. Italy had 2 outbreaks of BTV 4 in cattle.

Measures to prevent Bluetongue coming to Ireland

Bluetongue is spread between animals by midges and in Ireland the period of midge activity is between late March up to early December each year. 90-95% of the midge species in Ireland are capable of transmitting bluetongue. 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. In addition anyone importing ruminant animals into Ireland should consider the following risk mitigation measures:

- Do not import ruminant animals from BT restricted areas unless absolutely necessary.
- If you have to import then do so in the part of the year where there is no midge activity (from early December to end of February approximately).
- Only import animals from reputable sources.
- Seek additional assurances to ensure that animals are not infected with BT prior to departure, such as a recent negative PCR* test for BT antigen carried out in an accredited laboratory.
- Prior to importing contact your RVO for advice and to arrange for prompt testing post importation.
- Post importation, keep any imported animals isolated and indoors until they have been tested for BT by staff from this Department and have returned a negative test result.**



Please read and follow these biosecurity guidelines before making any decision to import:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/bluetonguedisease/BiosecurityAdviceFarmersImpLivestockVer1260318.pdf>

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Further information on Bluetongue:

DAFM website:

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

Bluetongue information leaflet for photographs of clinical signs:

<https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/animalhealthwelfare/diseasecontrols/bluetonguedisease/BluetongueFactsheet2017210617.pdf>

European Commission:

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

EU Regulation 1266 of 2007 on the control of Bluetongue:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1526483808190&uri=CELEX:02007R1266-20120605>

Contact details for RVOs available at:

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

***PCR** or polymerase chain reaction is a technique used in molecular biology to detect virus genome in this case. A test for BT is usually carried out on blood. A positive PCR test essentially means that the virus is present in the sample tested.

** DAFM implements a risk-based post import testing protocol whereby all ruminant animals originating from mainland Europe are sampled for BTV on their arrival in Ireland.

