

GB to change status from 'Protection Zone' to 'Lower Risk Zone for BTV8' from 12th June 2010

- In the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCOFCAH) on 2 June the Commission and Member States agreed to GB changing our zone from a PZ to a Lower Risk Zone for BTV8. This will take place from 12 June 2010.
- The implications of what a BTV8 Lower Risk Zone means for GB are outlined below.

Why change to a Lower Risk Zone for BTV8?

- If we remain in a Protection Zone, we remain at risk of disease returning through imports as free movement is allowed between our BTV8 protection zone and other 'confluent' BTV8 protection zones in Europe.
- A Lower Risk Zone is an option within the bluetongue regulations which imposes tighter controls on animals brought into the country from 'confluent zones' to help keep disease out. This is crucial as it will ensure that BTV8 will not return to GB through animal moves from these areas and hamper our chances of moving to freedom. Importantly, it also enables livestock holders to continue to vaccinate against bluetongue. If we were to move directly to freedom we would have to stop vaccinating.
- If GB becomes a Lower Risk Zone for BTV8, the rules for animal moves out of GB to other BTV zones will remain broadly the same as those in the current Protection Zone, except they would no longer need to be tested post vaccination.
- In summary the benefits of a LRZ are:
 - It provides GB with additional protection from imports from member states that are in the same BTV8 zone as us
 - It allows livestock owners in GB to export animals to other BTV areas without the need to test their livestock first
 - Livestock owners in GB can continue to vaccinate as normal

Additional Requirements for a Lower Risk Zone

- Because of GBs current surveillance and disease status the Commission has agreed we can implement the LRZ, which in a way acts as the first step toward disease freedom. However in order to do this we need to carry out some additional surveillance which will involve individually testing unvaccinated animals across the South of GB, which is our high risk area for disease due to the proximity to the continent. We will attempt to do this through using existing Animal Health visits to minimise disruption to livestock keepers, and would

encourage farmers to allow samples from their animals to also be submitted to test for Bluetongue. We will also carry out our winter surveillance as we did in 2009.

Key Messages for all Livestock Holders

- The LRZ provides us with some additional protection by ensuring that animals moved into GB from BTV8 zones need to meet additional conditions. It is vital that livestock keepers continue to source responsibly and check the health and vaccination status of their animals.
- Our recent surveillance activities give us some assurance that we do not have circulating disease in GB, and we could be in a position to consider moving to disease freedom at some point in the near future.
- However we must not be complacent. Bluetongue is still circulating on the continent and there is still the possibility that it may blow across to GB as it did in 2007 or that it may arrive in an imported animal.
- We need to ensure we continue to take steps to keep disease out, so that we maintain a good chance of becoming free and removing our Bluetongue zones and trade restrictions.
- Vaccination remains the only effective way to protect against bluetongue so it is important that livestock keepers continue to vaccinate their animals against BTV8.
- Livestock keepers must continue to remain vigilant for signs of disease. Suspicion of disease must be notified immediately to your local Animal Health Office.
- There will be implications for livestock keepers wishing to bring animals into GB, or move animals out of GB to other countries. This is explained in the table and descriptions below.

IN SUMMARY:

BTV susceptible animal movements	Previous situation whilst GB was in a full PZ for BTV8	Situation from 12th June when GB changes status to LRZ for BTV8
GB → Another BTV8 PZ	Free movement	Free movement
Another BTV8 PZ → GB	Free movement	Animals must meet 'Annex 3' conditions,
GB → free area or zone for serotypes <i>other than</i> BTV8	Animals must meet 'Annex 3 conditions'	Animals must meet 'Annex 3' conditions, except post-vaccination test no longer required

zone for <i>other</i> serotypes GB →	Animals must meet 'Annex 3 conditions'	Animals must meet 'Annex 3 conditions'
Free area → GB	Free Movement	Free movement

- However moves are also allowed if they are moves direct to slaughter, or various conditions around natural immunity or vector protection are met – further detail is provided in the annex to this note.

What the new zone means for a livestock holder *exporting* animals from GB

- To date, free movement has been allowed between the GB BTV8 PZ and BTV8 PZs in other countries (as long as the animals show no signs of disease at the time of move). This will continue once GB becomes a BTV8 LRZ on 12th June 2010.
- Moves from GB to other countries which are free from BTV, or have zones for serotypes other than BTV8, have been made under strict 'Annex 3' conditions to ensure that GB animals are protected from disease and pose no risk to others. Unless they are moving direct to slaughter. (Details on the conditions in Annex 3 of the BTV regulations 1266/2007 are provided at the end of this note)
- Once GB becomes a LRZ for BTV8, the rules for moves out of GB to these zones will remain broadly the same, except for one key difference – whereas previously animals required vaccination plus a test, this test will no longer be required from 12th June. As long as animals are certified as vaccinated (or meet any other of the 'Annex 3' conditions accepted by the importing MS, they will be able to move
- Movements out of GB to a BTV8 free area would not require insecticide treatment either.

What the new zone means for a livestock holder *importing* animals from a BTV8 PZ

- Just as GB animals have been able to move freely to other BTV8 PZs, free movement has also been allowed for animals coming *into* GB from other BTV8 PZs. This will change once a LRZ is in place.
- From 12th June, movements of animals from a BTV8 zones into GB need to be made under full 'Annex 3 conditions' unless they are moves to direct slaughter. This is crucial as it will ensure that BTV8 will not return to GB through moves from these areas and hamper our chances of moving to freedom.
- 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

- Movements of animals into GB from zones for serotypes *other than BTV8* have always been required to meet the 'Annex 3' conditions. This will continue. (Details of the Annex 3 conditions can be found in the annex to this note)
- Any animal imports that are in place on 12th June may continue under the old import rules.

Which countries are in which zones?

At present the following countries, or part of these countries, are in BTV8 PZs. Movement has been allowed freely from these areas, but from 12th June animals will now have to meet full 'Annex 3' conditions to move into GB:

Netherlands
Germany
Austria
Belgium
Czech Republic
Denmark
Luxembourg
Slovakia
Switzerland (non-EU Member State)
Parts of Italy which are in a BTV8 zone only
Parts of Poland which are in a BTV8 zone only
Parts of Sweden which are in a BTV8 zone only
Parts of Hungary which are in a BTV8 zone only
Parts of Norway which are in a BTV8 zone only

However the zones are subject to change and livestock keepers are advised to consult the latest EU map to check the latest situation at the time of movement:

http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/controlmeasures/bt_restrictedzones-map.jpg

Regulation 1266/2007 - ANNEX 3 conditions

Annex III conditions' - Exemptions from the Bluetongue Exit Ban

If GB changes to 'BTV8 lower risk zone', 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. As mentioned above the most likely conditions to be used for importation into GB's LRZ will be around vaccination.

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>