

## BLUETONGUE MONTHLY SURVEILLANCE JUNE-OCTOBER 2010

GB has remained in a Protection Zone for BTV8 since our first case of disease in 2007. We have had no cases of BTV 8 since 2008 and our recent national surveillance which was carried out in November 2009 shows that we are free from circulating disease. As you are aware the European Commission has now agreed that as from 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 GB can implement a Lower Risk Zone (LRZ) which in a way acts as the first step toward freedom from disease.

In order to meet the requirements for the LRZ Defra with the assistance of Animal Health and the VLA are carrying out some additional monthly surveillance between June and October this year in areas considered to be at higher risk of a new incursion of BTV in the East Midlands, East South West and South East of England. The Counties involved in the surveillance are listed below.

- **East Midlands** (including City Of Derby, City Of Leicester ,City Of Nottingham , Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutland)
- **East of England** (including Cambridgeshire , Bedfordshire , Hertfordshire , Norfolk , Suffolk, Essex, North London)
- **South East** (including Brighton And Hove, East Sussex , Greater London Authority , Kent , Medway, Surrey , West Sussex)
- **South West** (including City Of Plymouth, Devon, Torbay, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly, Somerset, Dorset , Bournemouth and Poole, Bath and North East Somerset, City of Bristol, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon, Wiltshire)

Animal Health will be visiting farms in these areas over the coming months to collect samples for this monthly surveillance . They will seek as far as possible to align sampling to those herds already being visited by Animal Health staff to minimise disruption to farmers. No more than 20 animals will be sampled per farm. When arranging or receiving other routine visits from Animal Health to inspect or test animals it would be extremely useful if livestock holders could confirm that they are willing to participate in this bluetongue surveillance and to help identify animals they consider to be eligible for sampling. The criteria are as follows:

- **Bovine and ovine** species eligible for sampling
- Animals must be **unvaccinated**, i.e. have never been vaccinated against Bluetongue. If a herd or flock has previously been vaccinated against Bluetongue, but contains *individual* animals aged over 6 months that have themselves never been vaccinated, then these unvaccinated animals are eligible for testing.
- Animals must be **aged 6 months or over**
- Animals must have been **continuously resident anywhere within the sampling areas** of East Midlands, East, South West and South East of England listed above since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. Animal Health will seek to ensure an even coverage over the whole of the sampling region over the 6 month period by monitoring and targeting sampling as appropriate

The results of this surveillance will be used to meet the requirements of the LRZ and provide us with additional assurance that BT is not circulating within GB. Should the results of this monthly surveillance show that there is no circulating virus, it will also take us a step closer to being able to consider officially declaring freedom from disease at some point in the

future. National surveillance across the whole of GB, similar to that undertaken in November 2009, is also being planned again for November 2010.

We hope that livestock holders will understand the importance of this work to the GB farming industry in general and participate in this surveillance to help us to demonstrate that GB has successfully halted the spread of Bluetongue.

However in the mean time it is important that livestock keepers continue to report suspicion of Bluetongue as this remains a legal requirement and is a key element of our surveillance. It is also crucial to continue to vaccinate against BTV8 as this is our best defence against the disease.

The change to a Lower Risk Zone will also have implications for those livestock keepers looking to move animals in or out of GB. This means that as of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 imports to GB from other BTV8 Restricted Zones will have to meet additional import requirements under Annex 3 of Commission Regulation 1266/2007. Information on these requirements is available on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/diseases/atoz/bluetongue/index.htm> however in summary we expect the new movement conditions to be as follows:

#### **For Animal Movements into GB**

- 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

The rules for importing animals from PZs with other BTV serotypes (e.g. BTV1 & 8 in France) remain unchanged.

#### **For Animal Movements Out of GB**

- The rules for moves out of GB to other BTV 8 zones will remain broadly the same, except for one key difference – whereas previously animals required vaccination plus a test, this test is no longer required. 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