

BLUETONGUE DISEASE **CONTINGENCY PLANS** **FOR GREAT BRITAIN**

The attached are the contingency plans for dealing with outbreaks of Bluetongue disease in Great Britain, in accordance with Article 18 of Directive 2000/75 introducing Community measures for the control of Bluetongue.

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BLUETONGUE CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR GREAT BRITAIN

This document sets out the contingency plans for Bluetongue disease (BT) as drawn up in 2003 for Great Britain. It should be read in conjunction with the Defra Exotic Animal Disease Generic Contingency Plan. Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive have responsibility for detailed contingency planning in their own countries. Some elements of the planning are specific to each of their institutional arrangements but are mutually complementary. In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of disease, Defra, SEERAD and NAWAD will ensure close liaison in order to co-ordinate the emergency response process.

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LEGAL POWERS

1.1 The statutory powers for the control of Bluetongue are contained in the following legislation: The Bluetongue Order 2003 and parallel legislation in Scotland and Wales

1.2 **NOTIFICATION OF SUSPECTED BLUETONGUE
PROCEDURES AT INFECTED PREMISES
THE DESTRUCTION OF CARCASSES
THE CONTROL OF MOVEMENTS**

The Bluetongue Order 2003 requires the notification of suspicion of Bluetongue and gives the Minister powers to control the disease. This includes powers to control the movement of animals, powers to slaughter animals (if this is necessary), powers to require animals to be vaccinated against Bluetongue and powers to control the vector. Carcasses are not directly infectious to other animals. Disposal of carcasses do not require special provisions over and above those specified for high risk animal waste products.

1.3 **BLUETONGUE: EU LEGISLATION**

Measures for the control and eradication of Bluetongue are set down in Council Directive 2000/75/EEC .

The key provisions of the Directive which domestic legislation implements are:

- notification to the competent authority of the Member State if Bluetongue is suspected.
- Imposition of movement restrictions on suspicion of disease and confining animals indoors, where possible, at times when the vectors are active on the premises concerned.
- surveillance of the area where disease or presence of the vector is suspected.
- where circulation of the disease is confirmed, restrictions to be imposed within a protection zone of at least 100km around the infected holding and a surveillance zone at least 50km wider than the protection zone.
- eradication of the disease by control of the vector, slaughter of affected animals where this is considered to be appropriate and/or vaccination of animals.

1.4 **BLUETONGUE: GREAT BRITAIN LEGISLATION**

The Bluetongue Order 2003 enacts the provisions of Directive 2000/75 in England. Parallel legislation enacts the Directive for the devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland.

1.5 ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

Local Authorities will enforce and execute the provisions of the Bluetongue Order 2003, unless the legislation makes specific provisions otherwise. Local Authorities may be helped in this by other civil organisations. The penalties for not complying with the legislation are detailed in Part V of the Animal Health Act 1981.

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

- 2.1 Animal Health is a devolved policy area. However, a concordat arrangement between England, Scotland and Wales provides a single GB wide State Veterinary Service. In any disease outbreak, the three countries will seek to work within an agreed framework reflecting the fact that Great Britain is a single geographical land mass and the role of the SVS as a GB-wide organisation.
- 2.2 In England, responsibility for the control of Bluetongue rests with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who delegates the direction of control strategies to the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). The development of policy for the control of bluetongue is the responsibility of the Exotic Disease Prevention and Control Division (EDPC) and the Veterinary Exotic Diseases Research and Official Controls Division (VEROD) of the Animal Health and Welfare Directorate of Defra.
 - 2.2.1 SVS Contingency Planning Division have responsibility for preparation of detailed contingency plans and emergency preparedness. The SVS is responsible for the implementation of the operational response. The Communications Directorate are responsible for arranging publicity and awareness for notifiable diseases. Divisional Veterinary Managers have responsibility for emergency preparedness at the local level.
 - 2.2.2 The response to a disease alert will be controlled by a single-line command structure for control of animal diseases.
 - 2.2.3 Structures are the same as those outlined in the Defra Exotic Disease Animal Generic Contingency Plan.
- 2.3 Overall management of the Scottish situation will be by a Disease Strategy Group (DSG) which will be chaired by the Secretary of SEERAD or the Head of the Rural Group. Its members will consist of senior officials including CVO (Scotland) and the chief Agricultural Officer. The DSG will supervise the handling of the Scottish outbreak and will ensure that Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Parliament and the media are appropriately briefed.
- 2.4 The Welsh..... (to be added).

2.5 Throughout Great Britain, the Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC) is the responsibility of the Regional Operations Director/Divisional Veterinary Manager. It includes representatives from relevant agencies, local authorities, other key stakeholders and any other personnel necessary for the operational control of a disease outbreak.

THE NATIONAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE (NDCC)

3.1 The National Disease Control Centre will be established on confirmation of a disease outbreak (see Annex 1). The unit is fully equipped with appropriate telephony and IT equipment.

The responsibilities of the NDCC include:

- receiving information on suspected cases;
- mapping and recording tracings, dangerous contacts and contiguous premises;
- co-ordinating surveillance;
- identification of operational problems and resolving them;
- commissioning daily situation reports from Local Disease Control Centres;
- preparation of management information reports.

3.2 In the event of an animal disease outbreak, the rapid emergency provision of staff from within core Defra and its associated Agencies will be a key factor in the successful and timely control of the disease. The Defra Management Board will provide clear direction in order that non-essential staff can volunteer their services and be released quickly.

3.3 The Chief Executive SVS will maintain a list of Defra middle managers who have the required skills and experience to take up key positions in the NDCC. These individuals will be called upon as soon as disease is confirmed and are expected to take up post as soon as possible (within 24 hours of request). The NDCC will operate within the following structure under the Director of Operations:

Disease Reporting Unit
Vet Operations
Operational Communications
Non-Veterinary Operations
Personnel
Finance
Vaccination Operations (when appropriate)

The Contingency Planning Director SVS will maintain job descriptions for key personnel within these units.

3.4 The CVO will seek advice in controlling a disease outbreak from the Bluetongue Expert Group (see paragraph 7.1).

THE LOCAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE

- 4.1 Bluetongue preparedness and control at the local level is the responsibility of the Divisional Veterinary Manager (DVM) / Regional Operations Director (if appointed) (ROD) at the Animal Health Divisional Office which often acts, *inter alia*, as the Local Disease Control Centre. Each Centre is managed by the DVM or ROD who is directly responsible to the Director or Director General of the Operations and Service Delivery Directorate General. In Scotland the DVM and ROD will operate jointly and will report to the Disease Strategy Group. There are 24 centres; the list of Centres, and a map showing the area covered by each is attached at Annex II.
- 4.2 In the event of a disease outbreak the DVM / ROD may decide to set up a temporary Disease control centre convenient to the disease outbreak.
- 4.3 The local centres are equipped with the facilities, stores and instructions necessary to undertake the task.
- 4.4 Standing arrangements are in place for access to major equipment. Procurement and Contracts Division within Defra have put in place regional and local contracts with suppliers to meet the requirements in dealing with notifiable diseases.
- 4.5 The responsibilities of the local centres during an outbreak are to control and eradicate the disease and return affected premises to a disease-free status by:
- * arranging the preliminary investigations (see instructions to staff) and transport of specimens to the diagnostic laboratories;
 - * liaison with the National Disease Control Centre to determine the extent of the protection and surveillance zone;
 - * liaising with the police, where necessary, to shut infected premises and with Local Authorities to arrange movement controls and closure or supervision of markets
 - * supervising procedures at infected premises (if necessary, valuation, slaughter and disposal of compulsorily slaughtered animals);
 - * undertaking serological surveillance programmes in protection and surveillance zones as required by the Epidemiological team in AHW (DG);
 - * vector surveillance and control at Infected premises and elsewhere in protection/surveillance zones;
 - * (where necessary) arranging compensation to stock owners;
 - * inspection of livestock premises in the local area. All infected premises should be visited weekly and all other farms with ruminants and other high-risk premises within 20-km of an

Infected premises in the protection zone will be visited, animals inspected and samples taken;

- * In the event of emergency vaccination being agreed, the execution of the vaccination programme;
- * maintaining accurate records for each confirmed infected premises;
- * ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data on the Disease Control System database;

4.6 In the event of an outbreak the Local Authority has responsibility for the enforcement and execution of the legislation unless there are specific provisions therein making otherwise.

4.7 The State Veterinary Service will maintain a database of their veterinary personnel who are able to respond to any animal disease outbreak. On authority from the Chief Executive SVS, individuals will be alerted with immediate effect and deployed as instructed by DVMs. In addition vets from other parts of Defra and its agencies, and from other government departments will be alerted and deployed as appropriate. Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs) will be used as appropriate. If overseas veterinary resource is deemed necessary, the CVO will send a formal request to the International Animal Health Emergency Management Reserve Countries and also to EU Member States, if necessary.

4.8 Local Emergency Response Plans include details of key personnel, together with key job descriptions. These individuals will be called upon as soon as disease is confirmed and are expected to take up post as soon as possible (within 24 hours of request). DVMs are responsible for maintaining these lists. Key personnel would include staff for the following sections:

Tracing
Epidemiology
Allocations
Surveillance
Licensing
Communications
Field Operations
Field Team
GIS
DCS (data handling)
Facilities
Personnel
Finance
Record Control Centre

COMMUNICATIONS

MEDIA

- 5.1 News Releases about a disease outbreak will be communicated through Communications Directorate Press Office. RODs/DVMs should ensure that they liaise with their local Government News Network (GNN) representative to ensure that accurate and timely briefings are given to the media and stakeholders. Media in Scotland will be briefed by the SE Press Office.

5.2 WEBSITE

Defra's website is a key source of information in the event of an outbreak of disease. Once disease is confirmed, a dedicated site will be established as soon as possible. This is the responsibility of the Head of Exotic Disease Prevention and Control Division working in co-operation with the Head of News Media in the Communications Directorate.

The website will include -

- News and Information
- A full list of the number of Infected Premises (IPs) updated daily.
- Full details of Infected areas including protection and surveillance zones with interactive maps.
- Full details of disease control measures and restrictions.
- Advice to farmers, local authorities and other rural stakeholders.
- Advice on rural activities.
- Links to relevant websites (e.g. Meat and Livestock Commission, Environment Agency, The Countryside Agency, English Nature, Food Standards Agency, the Devolved Administrations, National Farmers Union, Local Authority sites etc).

Detailed technical information on Bluetongue, its cause, control and legislation is already available at
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/disease/bluetongue.htm>

A parallel website will operate in Scotland.

5.3 HELP LINES

Defra General Helpline (08459 335577) will be escalated as necessary to prepare for intense public interest. This will include identifying staff resources, the need for supplementary helplines plus provision of briefing for helpline staff.

NATIONAL DISEASE CONTROL CENTRE (NDCC)

- 5.4 The Chief Executive of SVS will establish a National Disease Control Centre as soon as circulation of disease in an area is suspected (see section 4). The NDCC has a pivotal role in providing information and an accurate ground picture. It is responsible for co-ordinating the regional situation reports and collating key statistics to be reported to the wider Government Community.

BLUETONGUE EXPERT GROUPS

- 6.1 The Bluetongue Expert Group would include the Institute of Animal Health (IAH) Consultants; entomologists; epidemiologists; AHW(DG) Vets; AHW(DG) policy and SVS vets / administrative staff. The Expert Group is a group of specialists who will provide advice to senior management on surveillance programmes, analyse information and advise on control strategies.

HR RESOURCES

- 7.1 A range of measures are in place in Defra and SVS to provide staffing in the event of an emergency. The measures include a volunteers register for non veterinary staff which can be called on if needs be and the ability to seek assistance from other government departments, which has been formally recognised in a central Memorandum of Understanding.
- 7.2 The Chief Executive SVS maintains a list of veterinary and technical staff who can be called on in the event of an outbreak of Bluetongue.
- 7.3 In addition to these personnel a number of call-off arrangements are in place for veterinarians employed by local authorities and the Meat Hygiene Service. Local Veterinary Inspectors supplemented by temporary veterinary staff would also be used as appropriate. There are also arrangements in place if overseas veterinary staff are required.

AVAILABILITY OF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

- 8.1 Detailed instructions and guidance for procurement professionals and action by Procurements and Contracts Division (PCD) within Defra can be found in the Procurement and Contracts Division Contingency Plan.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CALL-OFF CONTRACTS

- 8.2 Procurement and Contracts Division have put in place, regional and local contracts with suppliers to meet the requirements in dealing with notifiable diseases. PCD will review such contractual arrangements on a regular basis. Consideration to be given to the suitability of national contracts in order to ensure that the suppliers contained remain capable of fulfilling their commitments. A list of such contracts will be placed on the PCD intranet site. DVMs/ RODs must liaise with PCD to ensure they have adequate contractual cover in the event of an outbreak. The

PCD Contingency Plan introduces a local procurement and contracts team to manage these contracts in the event of an outbreak of a notifiable disease. PCD will ensure that the suppliers are:

- readily available to fight the disease;
- of suitable quality to complete the tasks set;
- able to provide best value for money;
- financially vetted;
- capable of providing all required services.

8.3 Local emergency response plans will guide DVMs/RODs to where they can seek advice on procurement procedure.

PURCHASE/ HIRED GOODS REGISTERS

8.4 DVMs/ RODs will ensure that the generic purchased/ hired register is installed in their respective AHDOs and that staff are familiar with its functionality.

DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORIES

9.1 EU Council Directive 2000/75/EEC lists the Institute for Animal Health (IAH), Pirbright as the Community Reference laboratory. This laboratory will also act as the national Reference Laboratory.

9.2 Standing arrangements for the delivery of specimens to the diagnostic laboratory include using national couriers for road transport and/or the national airlines where convenient. It is estimated that specimens can be delivered to the laboratories within (8) hours (maximum). Stocks of sampling equipment are held at local disease control centres.

EMERGENCY VACCINATION

10.1 The EU Directive permits the use of vaccination as a control measure in certain circumstances.

10.2 In the event of a decision to vaccinate against Bluetongue, supplies of vaccine would be ordered by the CVO from the EU Bluetongue Vaccine Bank. In a worst case scenario around 7.4 million doses of vaccine might be required. At present, the UK does not hold a marketing authorisation for use of such vaccines. Vaccination could therefore only be used on a vaccinate to kill basis. If such a policy was adopted, further details would be issued to holders of this contingency plan concerning the quantity of vaccines necessary.

DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES

11.1 The carcasses of animals infected with Bluetongue are not directly infectious to other animals. Therefore no special requirements are necessary for the disposal of carcasses. Animals who have died of the disease must be disposed of in accordance with legislation laid down in the Animal Waste Directive 90/667/EEC implemented by the Animal By-Products Order 1999 (and from 30 April 2003 by the Animal By-Products Regulation, EC/1774/2002). Where animals are compulsorily slaughtered, Defra and the devolved administrations would be responsible for arranging the disposal of carcasses in the same way.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES

12.1 Training for members of staff are as follows:

- All veterinarians joining the veterinary service are given instruction in Bluetongue control.
- All veterinarians in the service undergo a refresher-training programme.
- Training for lay personnel who will participate in field aspects of Bluetongue control and for office personnel who will staff local disease control centres is undertaken at local level.

12.2 Staff identified as key personnel for the National Disease Control Centre undergo refresher training *via* a simulated epizootic disease outbreak exercise on a regular basis. Local Disease Control Centre staff undergo regular epizootic disease training days. The interval between these training sessions is no greater than 2 years.

PUBLICITY AND DISEASE AWARENESS

- 13.1 The Defra website has information about Bluetongue, including a Technical Review of the disease, the virus and the vectors and the Bluetongue Disease Control Strategy for the UK.
- 13.2 Private and SVS veterinarians will in the course of their routine visits to their clients' livestock holdings disseminate information about notifiable diseases and disease control strategies. Official visits by SVS veterinary and technical staff include:-
- registration visit to new keepers of livestock;
 - investigation of reports of suspected disease;
 - welfare inspections on farm;
 - advisory and inspection visits to large livestock units, livestock dealers premises, artificial insemination studs, units rearing exotic species and zoological collections;
 - attendance at livestock markets and major agricultural shows.

The effect of this system of official advisory and inspection visits is to ensure that all livestock keepers receive advice on statutory disease control procedures and are kept aware of national and international animal disease risks. All holdings with livestock are registered, and receive visits as necessary.

- 13.3 Information and advice regarding the prevention, diagnosis and control of notifiable diseases is available at all times from the Animal Health Divisional Offices and every report of suspected disease is investigated by a Veterinary Officer who should arrive on the premises within 2 hours of the report being made.