

BATTLE **BLUETONGUE**

FACT CHECKS

MYTH: It's too late to vaccinate against bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3)

Fact: It isn't too late to vaccinate against bluetongue. Vaccinating protects your animals before disease spreads. If you have bluetongue on your farm already, you can still vaccinate your healthy animals. Talk to your vet, order your vaccine and protect your stock.

MYTH: Bluetongue vaccines cause infertility in cattle and sheep

Fact: The disease itself is the real threat. Bluetongue can cause abortions, foetal deformities and stillbirths. Vaccination is safe. There is no evidence linking bluetongue vaccines to fertility problems in cattle or sheep.

MYTH: Vaccinating bulls and rams make them infertile

Fact: There is no evidence to suggest that bluetongue vaccines have a negative effect on fertility. While it is good practice to vaccinate males outside of the breeding period, completing vaccine courses three weeks before mating maximises immunity and won't cause any detriment. The real risk is bluetongue itself, which can severely impact fertility in bulls and rams and can cause long-term infertility.

MYTH: You can't vaccinate pregnant animals against bluetongue

Fact: The BTV-3 vaccines can be used during pregnancy. There is no evidence that bluetongue vaccines increase the risk of abortion any more than other vaccines given during pregnancy. The disease itself is the real risk as it can cause abortions and deformities if pregnant animals become infected. Speak to your vet to plan the best time to vaccinate.

MYTH: Bluetongue is only an issue for some areas of England

Fact: There are hotspots of cases, for example in the South West of England. However, bluetongue cases are increasing and likely to spread to many other areas. Vaccination remains an important option for all farms to consider.

MYTH: Bluetongue isn't serious, so there's no need to vaccinate

Fact: Bluetongue is deadly and vaccination is vital. In the 2026 calving season, some farmers only had 50% of their cattle producing a viable calf. We have seen a rapid rise in cases in 2026 compared with previous years and an increase in the severity of clinical signs. Vaccination helps protect animal health, welfare and your livelihood.

MYTH: Sheep dips, insecticides and repellents stop bluetongue infection

Fact: These products are not licensed for this purpose. There is no evidence that they kill *Culicoides* midges quickly enough to prevent infection or protect against onward transmission. Using these products also has potential environmental, ecological and resistance impacts – see the SCOPS website for more information. Vaccination is our only defence – speak to your vet.

MYTH: If I live in England, my farm will face restrictions if I have a positive case of BTV-3

Fact: There are no restrictions on the sale or purchase of animals from a BTV-3-positive premise in England, provided the animals are not showing clinical signs and are not under restriction for some other reason.

MYTH: This is a new, more severe serotype

Fact: This is the same serotype and strain of BTV-3 that was confirmed in 2023, 2024 and 2025. It is not new, but we are seeing more severe clinical signs in livestock. The temperature has been optimal for the virus, and it is circulating at a high level in livestock-dense areas, thus contributing to the severity seen.

MYTH: Not shearing your sheep will protect them from bluetongue infection

Fact: Leaving sheep unshorn cannot be relied on to protect them against bluetongue. Research has shown that unshorn sheep suffer a similar rate of attack from midges as shorn sheep. Some species of midge will target areas with little or no wool, such as the flanks, head, legs and underbelly. Vaccination is the only effective and proven way to protect your animals against bluetongue.

BLUETONGUE CLINICAL SIGNS

Sheep

- Ulcers or sores in the mouth and nose
- Discharge from the eyes or nose and drooling from mouth
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, head and neck and the coronary band (where the skin of the leg meets the horn of the foot)
- Red skin as a result of blood collecting beneath the surface
- Fever
- Lameness
- Breathing problems
- Abortion, foetal deformities and stillbirths
- Death

Cattle

- Lethargy
- Lameness
- Crusty erosions around the nostrils and muzzle
- Redness of the mouth, eyes and nose
- Reddening of the skin above the hoof
- Nasal discharge
- Reddening and erosions on the teats
- Fever
- Milk drop
- Not eating
- Abortion, foetal deformities and stillbirths

Lambs

- Lambs born small, weak, deformed or blind
- Death of lambs within a few days of birth
- Stillbirths

Calves

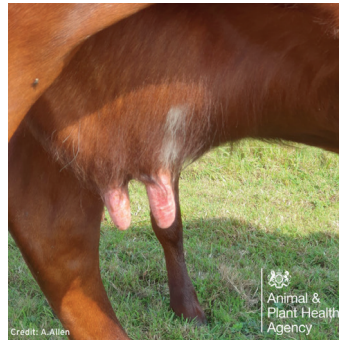
- Calves born small, weak, deformed or blind
- Death of calves within a few days of birth
- Stillbirths



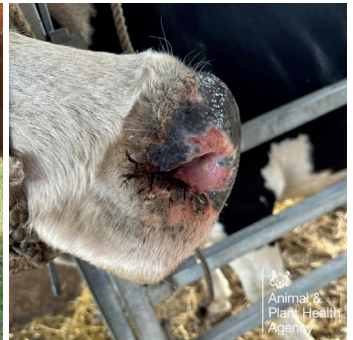
Ulcers or sores in mouth



Nasal discharge, crusting, swelling of face



Lesions on teats

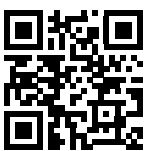


Crusting around the nostrils



See the **BLUETONGUE VIRUS HUB** for more information:
ruminanthw.org.uk/bluetongue-virus-hub

THERE IS SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO FARMERS AND VETS



To find contact details for mental health charities and further information on our tools and resources, scan the QR code or visit
ahdb.org.uk/bluetongue

