

**Jim Blee**  
Deputy Director of Animal Health and  
Welfare Policy Division



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

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24 September 2024

Dear Sir / Madam,

## **BLUETONGUE VIRUS UPDATE**

Minister Muir has recently written to MLA colleagues, 18 September 2024, to update on the ongoing Bluetongue virus outbreak in England. A copy of the letter is attached at Annex A and can I request that this is deposited in the Assembly Library.

Grateful if you can progress

Yours sincerely,

**JIM BLEE**

**Assistant Director of Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division**

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If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

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**From the Office of the  
Minister of Agriculture,  
Environment and Rural Affairs**



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Our Ref: SUB-1764-2024  
Date: 18 September 2024

Dear MLA

## **BLUETONGUE VIRUS UPDATE**

I am writing to update you on the ongoing Bluetongue (BTV) disease outbreak in Great Britain (GB) and to request your support in promoting my Department's messaging to minimise the risk of incursion of this disease into Northern Ireland (NI).

BTV is an insect-borne viral disease (transmitted by biting midges) to which all species of ruminants are susceptible, although sheep are most severely affected. Further information on BTV including clinical signs in cattle, sheep and goats can be accessed on the DAERA website [here](#).

On Monday 26 August 2024, the first case of BTV was confirmed in a single sheep at a premises in Norfolk, England. As of 12 September 2024, infection has been confirmed across 42 premises. Further details on the GB situation can be accessed [here](#).

The most likely route of disease entry to NI is currently through the import of infected animals or germplasm (semen or ova).

My officials continue to work closely with colleagues across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to monitor the evolving disease situation. In addition, there has been extensive stakeholder engagement with industry to advise them of the current situation, the need for vigilance, prompt reporting and promoting the responsible sourcing of animals and germplasm.

I have also written to my counterpart, Minister McConalogue TD in the Republic of Ireland to ensure continued collaboration in our fight to keep this disease out.

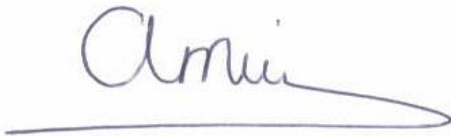
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Furthermore, my officials are actively engaged in disseminating information through various channels, including DAERA social media platforms to heighten awareness of the disease, its clinical signs and to encourage early reporting of suspect cases. I would urge you to share these messages of awareness and the need for responsible sourcing of animals and germplasm across your agri-food constituents to ensure we are doing all we can to keep NI free from BTV, in order to maintain our high animal health and welfare status and protect the agri-food economy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A Muir". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a long, horizontal stroke that extends to the right.

**ANDREW MUIR MLA**  
**Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs**

***Bluetongue is a notifiable disease and any suspicions of disease must be reported to the DAERA Helpline immediately on 0300 200 7840, or the local [DAERA Direct Regional Office](#).***