



Ref: VITT 1200/BT – Belgium
Date: 24 July 2007

Bluetongue (serotype unknown) in Belgium

Note: Defra's International Trade Core Function (ITCF) monitors outbreaks of high impact diseases around the world. Bluetongue (BT) is among those diseases of major concern.

1 Disease Report

Belgium has reported a case of bluetongue (BT) in a sheep that died in Oelegem, Antwerpen, in the north of Belgium. This outbreak is within the current BT restriction zones in Belgium and neighbouring countries (see map) and was confirmed after laboratory tests. The BTV serotype has not yet been determined.



2 Situation assessment

This report follows recent outbreaks in western Germany which confirmed that bluetongue virus had 'over-wintered' successfully. It also suggests that bluetongue may be re-emerging in north-east Europe. Imports of BT susceptible animals to the UK from Belgium are not permitted.

See the preliminary outbreak assessment on the German outbreaks at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/monitoring/pdf/btv-germany130707.pdf>.

3 Conclusions

This incident adds to the belief that bluetongue is likely to have over-wintered on the continent. It is significantly further west than the recent cases in Germany so it increases the risk that infected vectors could be blown across the sea to England if the meteorological conditions support this. The prevalence of bluetongue virus in Belgium is highly uncertain but may become clearer within the next few weeks as we enter a period when vector activity is expected to intensify and this may lead to further clinical cases.

We will continue to monitor and review developments.