



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 33/25

Changes to Bluetongue Investigations in England's Restricted Zone

Date issued: 10 September 2025

Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OV) in Great Britain (GB) of the relevant changes to bluetongue investigations in England's Restricted Zone.

Background

2. **From Tuesday 1 July 2025**, APHA has changed its procedures of how bluetongue (BTV) suspected cases will be investigated within England's bluetongue Restricted Zone (RZ).
3. **Bluetongue remains a notifiable disease** and anyone suspecting bluetongue is legally obliged to report it immediately to APHA:

England: 03000 200 301

Wales: 03003 038 268

Scotland: Contact your local Field Services Office

Action

4. In England as before, when APHA is contacted by someone reporting suspicion of BTV, a duty veterinarian will be available to discuss the case. During that discussion if sufficient evidence suggests BTV or other exotic notifiable diseases are not present, the APHA vet will decide no further action is taken.

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

5. However, if bluetongue cannot be ruled out, APHA will assess whether an on-site investigation is necessary.

6. If the animal(s) are:

On a holding within the **England Bluetongue Restricted Zone and have not moved in from outside the ERZ**

AND

No other notifiable diseases are suspected

APHA will **not** conduct an on-site visit or impose restrictions. Instead, the caller will be provided with an authorisation code to allow their private veterinary surgeon (PVS) to send samples from up to 3 affected animals directly to the Pirbright Institute for **government-funded testing**.

7. The Pirbright private testing [Sample Submission Form](#) should be used to do this and the appropriate [Sample Packaging and Submission Guidelines](#) must be followed. The animal keeper will need to cover the cost of sampling and postage.

8. Samples submitted from cattle may also be tested for Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease Virus (EHDV) depending on APHA's risk assessment and in relation to the geographical location of the holding.

9. If APHA decide to test for EHDV the caller will be informed and will be asked to mark this on the submission form. The same sample for BTV will be used for EHDV testing and the cost of this testing will also be covered by UK Government.

10. Results:

Negative results (BTV and EHDV) will be sent by the Pirbright Institute to the original submitter.

Positive results for BTV will be communicated to the animal keeper by APHA. **If BTV-3 is confirmed in the ERZ, the affected premises and animals will not be restricted.** However, if a different serotype other than BTV 3 is identified, controls may apply.

Further information

11. If the clinical picture changes and/or morbidity rapidly increases, which could suggest another notifiable disease, the keeper/PVS must contact APHA again.

12. The authorisation code must be written on the sample submission form. Without it, the testing lab will charge for services.

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13. The animal's full identification numbers must be written on the submission form. For example, for cattle this must include the country code, the herd number and the 6-digit official ear tag number. Management numbers should not be used. The following links provide official guidance on the identification requirements of sheep and cattle:

- [Tag sheep with ear tags, pastern bands and boluses - GOV.UK](#), and
- [New or replacement official ear tags for cattle - GOV.UK](#).

14. An EDTA blood sample must be submitted for BTV (and EHDV) testing or if from a carcass, spleen. Heparin and clotted/serum samples cannot be used.

15. If the PVS is unable to send samples on the same day as collection, they should be refrigerated in their laboratory and dispatched later; samples must not be frozen.

16. If the animal has died suddenly and anthrax is suspected, anthrax must be tested for (by an authorised OV after APHA triage) and negated prior to BTV sampling.

17. If more than 3 samples from animals are submitted for testing, the additional costs will be charged to the submitter.

18. If the holding has already been confirmed with BTV during the 2025 vector season, it will not qualify for additional free testing. Cases suspected with BTV on a holding where BTV has been confirmed since 01/01/25 may still be tested, however testing will be at the keeper's expense.

19. The BTV vaccination status of the submitted animals should be noted in the comments on the submission form.

20. Animal keepers must continue to comply with England RZ controls and any licensing requirements in place at the time the animals are proposed to be moved. The animal keeper has a duty of care for their animals, providing symptomatic treatment and veterinary care as required.

21. For the latest information on BTV, visit: [Bluetongue: latest situation - GOV.UK](#)