International disease monitoring, July to September [2010]: Bluetongue

There are still no reports of bluetongue virus (BTV) from northern European countries. [This situation is unchanged as of 27 Nov 2010. - Mod.AS]

Morocco reported outbreaks of BTV-1 and BTV-4 for the 1st time this year. Vaccination with an attenuated vaccine for BTV-1 and BTV-4 is ongoing. Last year (2009), Morocco reported the same serotypes from various regions and applied vaccination in response.

BTV-1 has been reported for the 1st time in Algeria. Vaccination is not being applied.

BTV-1
Italy reported one outbreak of BTV-1 in sentinel goats in Cagliari, Sardinia.

Spain reported an outbreak of BTV-1 in the Badajoz region. According to the disease report, the cattle farm involved was part of a sentinel serosurveillance programme. There is no information about whether the virus has been isolated and what control measures are in place - the report suggests none, which indicates a lack of circulating virus.

Morocco reported 18 outbreaks of BTV-1 in sheep in the Sud, Centre Sud and Tensift regions.

Algeria reported 24 outbreaks of BTV-1 in sheep in the Bouira, Mila, Jijel, Tizi Ouzo, Setif and Bejaia regions.

BTV-2
Italy reported an outbreak of BTV-2 in Salerno, south of Naples, and 5 outbreaks in Sassari and Olbia Tempio (both in Sardinia) in sentinel sheep.

BTV-4
Italy reported BTV-4 in sentinel sheep in Sardinia (Olbia Tempio). Two outbreaks of BTV-4 have been reported in the south of Spain (Extremadura and Jaen) [But see archived regarding later outbreaks in Andalusia. - Mod.AS]. Spain has reclassified its low-risk zone for BTV-4 to a risk zone. Typing of the virus will determine whether it is a new introduction of BTV from Morocco or a residual virus from previous outbreaks.

Morocco reported 210 outbreaks of BTV-4 in Sud, Tensift, Centre Sud and Nord Ouest regions.

BTV-8
Spain considers the risk of introduction of BTV-8 to be very low and will move to voluntary vaccination for this serotype from January 2011. [See commentary].
[The good news is the complete absence of BTV-8 from western and north Europe during 2010; this will lead to an alleviation of the disease control/prevention measures, as already done in the UK (see the following item).

On the other hand, several countries have reported BT cases during October or November 2010.

Portugal reported 6 outbreaks of BTV-1, of which 5 in clinically suspected sheep and one in cattle tested within slaughterhouse surveillance. The 1st case was confirmed on 4 Oct 2010; see Portugal's presentation to SCFCAH 9-10 Nov 2010, at <http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/presentations/2010110910_bt_portugal.pdf>.

Cyprus conducts a BTV surveillance programme based on the serological examination of sentinel animals. Sentinel animals (cattle, sheep and goats) are tested on a monthly basis "from 17 farms spread evenly in the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus." From each of 17 farms, 10 sentinel animals are tested monthly by c-ELISA for the present of antibodies against bluetongue virus.

According to Cyprus presentation to SCFCAH of 9-10 Nov 2010, on 22 Oct 2010, 7/10 sheep from a flock (294 sheep, 28 goats) located at Pegeia village in the district of PAPHOS reacted positively to bluetongue virus (seroconverted). 6 out the 7 reacted positively by RRT-PCR; none showed clinical sign. Samples were sent to the Community Reference Laboratory (Pirbright) for virus confirmation and typing (results pending). See <http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/presentations/2010110910_bt_cyprus.pdf>.

Spain reported outbreaks of BTV-1 and BTV-4 during 2010. On 23 Nov 2010, a newswire included details of one suspected outbreak of BTV-8 in Andalusia. ProMED-mail's request for information on this puzzling case is pending (archived 20101126.4267).

According to IAH (Pirbright) data, BTV-4 was identified in cattle in southern Israel during Jan 2010.

According to a Turkish notification to the OIE dated 15 Oct 2010, clinical BT outbreak in sheep had been observed in Antalya in May 2010, later found to be caused by BTV-16. - Mod.AS]

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Bluetongue in Europe - changes to post import testing requirements
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Purpose
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To make livestock keepers and importers aware of the changes to DEFRA's
post import testing requirements for Bluetongue virus (BTV) susceptible animals. These changes will take effect from 26 Nov 2010.

Background
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At present, every bluetongue (BT) susceptible domestic animal imported from continental Europe [to the UK] is blood tested for BT after arrival in Great Britain (GB). This surveillance requirement has allowed us to assess disease incursion/spread through movement of infected animals from the continent.

BTV cases have decreased significantly across Europe in 2009 and 2010. The mass vaccination campaigns among Member States appear to have been successful in controlling the spread of disease and we consider that the threat of disease infection from the continent is now very low. GB is also part of a Low Risk Zone which means that all imports arriving from a BTV Protection Zone must be naturally immune or vaccinated.

In view of this changing risk DEFRA's post-import testing policy has consequently been revised in consultation with BTV experts, The Devolved Administrations and industry stakeholders.

Action
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As from 26 Nov 2010, post import testing will change from single post import testing for all BTV susceptible animals entering GB at 5-7 days to a risk-based regime as for other diseases whereby imports will be tested depending on the risk assessment of each susceptible consignment.

Given the change in risk from BT, 100 percent testing for BT will stop and move to a risk based testing approach, based on:
- the BTV status of the country of origin;
- the level of midge activity in the country of origin which would vary by season;
- random tests prioritising animals perceived to be at higher risk.

These risks will be regularly reviewed so that alterations to the checking regime can be made in response to any emerging risks.

Animals imported from The Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland do not require testing for BTV.

We understand that on the few occasions when BT susceptible exotic zoo animals are imported post import testing may pose some safety concerns for both the animals and their handlers. In cases where zoos are expecting imports of BT susceptible exotic animals we would advise that they plan ahead and inform Animal Health in advance. In these cases, taking into account circumstances of import, welfare, health and safety and BTV risks, a decision on post-import testing will be taken accordingly.

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[EU map on the declared BT Restriction zones has been last updated on 10 Nov 2010. Interestingly, Cyprus and several Aegean Greek islands, close to the Turkish coast, are restricted in relation to BTV-16, which was identified there in 2009; see
As already mentioned, BTV-16 was recorded also in Turkey, during May 2010 (archived 20101018.3776).

It will be interesting to obtain the results of the laboratory tests of the samples sent recently to Pirbright from Cyprus.

Updated information on the BT situation in Turkey, as well as on the situation during the recent BT season (July-November) in other Eastern Mediterranean countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan, will be helpful. - Mod.AS]

[see also:
Bluetongue - Europe (06): Spain (AN) st 8, susp, RFI 20101126.4267
Bluetongue - Europe (05): declining 20101103.3987
Bluetongue, ovine - Turkey: (AL), OIE 20101018.3776
Bluetongue - Europe (04): Spain, serotypes 1, 4 20101016.3751
Bluetongue - Europe (03): Spain (AN), BTV-4, OIE 20101006.3627
Bluetongue, ovine - Morocco: BTV-4, BTV-1, OIE 20100723.2466
Bluetongue - Europe (02): EU, update 20100605.1872
Bluetongue - Europe: BTV-8 time & place of introduction 20100319.0880
Bluetongue, bovine - Algeria: (EB), OIE, BTV-4 20100205.0396
2009
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Bluetongue - Europe (17): Greece (islands) BTV-1, BTV-16 20091206.4157
Bluetongue, bovine, ovine - Israel (05): (HZ), BTV-5 1st report, OIE 20091110.3894
Bluetongue - Europe (16): BTV-8, BTV-1, France 20091109.3885
Bluetongue, ovine - Morocco (02): OIE, BTV-1, BTV-4 20091103.3785
Bluetongue, ovine - Tunisia: (SZ, GF), OIE 20091023.3661
Bluetongue - Europe (15): Greece (LS) BTV-1, BTV-16, OIE 20091021.3616
Bluetongue, ovine - Morocco: OIE 20091002.3432
Bluetongue - Europe (14): Italy (PM), BTV-8, OIE 20090925.3360
Bluetongue, ovine - Algeria: OIE, BTV-1 20090916.3249
Bluetongue - Europe (13): BTV-8, BTV-1, France, update 20090905.3124
Bluetongue, bovine - Israel (04): (HZ), BTV-8, OIE 20090828.3025]

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