Department of
Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
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An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

Depairtment o'
Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

Bluetongue – Northern Ireland

Timeline of key events 29 November – 18 December 2025

29 November 2025

DAERA vets are investigating the suspicion of Bluetongue virus at a holding near Bangor in County Down.

A DAERA press release can be found here.

3 December 2025

Preliminary results of testing carried out by DAERA on a Co Down herd, where two suspected cases of Bluetongue virus were recently identified as BTV-3, have revealed suspected presence of the disease in a further 44 cattle.

Plans are in place for further testing on other farms in the 20km Temporary Control Zone (TCZ)

A DAERA press release can be found here.

5 December 2025

Following further analysis at the UK National Reference Laboratory Pirbright of the samples from the herd near Bangor, County Down, DAERA can confirm the strain as Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3).

As a result of the confirmation of Bluetongue (BTV-3), Northern Ireland's EU disease-free Bluetongue status is suspended.

Further information on EU recognised disease-free status for terrestrial and aquatic animals can be found here.

6 December 2025

A further 20km Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) has been introduced as of 6pm Saturday 06/12/25 around a premises near Greyabbey.

A DAERA press release can be found here.

A copy of the TCZ declaration which details the measures to be adhered to can be found here.

9 December 2025

Bluetongue - Livestock moves to England, Scotland and Wales - Update

Authorities in Great Britain have advised DAERA that they are now prepared to accept movements of animals that have not been sourced from Bluetongue Temporary Control Zones (TCZ) in Northern Ireland.

Advice is available on the DAERA Live Animal Exports webpage.

All moves from the temporary control zones are still prohibited.

Moves from free area in NI into TCZ

Moves of susceptible species from the free area in NI into the Bluetongue Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) will be permitted under General Licence from today Tuesday 9 December 2025.

A DAERA Press Release issued on the above is available to view here.

11 December 2025

New suspected case of Bluetongue virus under investigation

DAERA has announced the emergence of two more suspected Bluetongue cases on a third Co Down farm. The Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) surveillance has detected the suspect cases in two cows on a farm near Bangor. Following initial veterinary assessment, based on the proximity of cases, it has been decided that the emergence of the latest suspect case does not require an extension to the TCZ.

A DAERA Press Release issued on the above is available to view here.

12 December 2025

Bluetongue - Restrictions on Livestock Market to be relaxed

DAERA has announced plans to relax some of the restrictions on Saintfield market which is located in the Bluetongue Virus Temporary Control Zone (TCZ). The market will be able to accept livestock from outside the TCZ from Tuesday 16 December 2025, however the market will not, at this stage, be able to accept animals from farms located within the TCZ.

A DAERA Press Release issued on the above is available to view here.

16 December 2025

Preliminary results of testing carried out by DAERA on a small herd in Co Down have resulted in two positive samples for BTV.

Tracing will commence from the risk window of 01 September 2025 and the emergence of this latest suspect case does not require an extension to the current TCZ.

The discovery came as the National Reference Laboratory confirmed the Bluetongue virus (BTV) in the first Greyabbey case (initially reported on 6 December) and the case on a farm near the site of the original outbreak near Bangor (initially reported on 11 December).

A DAERA Press Release issued on the above is available to view here.

18 December 2025

DAERA has announced a further relaxation of animal movement restrictions for farms within the Bluetongue Virus (BTV) Temporary Control Zone (TCZ).

A DAERA Press Release on this development is available to view here.

19 December 2025

- Following the receipt of official laboratory confirmation by the National Reference Laboratory, Pirbright, the Chief Veterinary Officer for Northern Ireland has confirmed the presence of Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) in the two suspected cases of Bluetongue on the fourth County Down farm initially reported on 16 December 2025.

8 January 2026

- DAERA Minister Muir announces financial support for pre-movement testing in Bluetongue Temporary Control Zone.
- A DAERA Press Release on this development is available to view here.
- Private Veterinary Practitioners (PVPs) will be able to administer any required pre-movement testing, with the laboratory cost of the tests now payable by DAERA for a limited period.
- Further guidance for PVPs for pre movement testing of high-risk animals is available here.
- Guidance for farmers moving animals within and out of the Bluetongue TCZ is available here.

23 January 2026

- A suspect case of Bluetongue is being investigated at a premises near Portavogie, County Down.
- Preliminary results from the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) have indicated the presence of Bluetongue virus.
- Samples will be sent to the UK National Reference Laboratory Pirbright for confirmatory testing.
- The case was initially detected as a result of samples taken for pre-movement testing on high-risk animals at the premises.
- This is the first suspect case of Bluetongue virus detected since Bluetongue (BTV-3) was officially confirmed at the fourth infected premises in County Down on 19 December 2025.
- The emergence of this latest suspect case does not require an extension to the Temporary Control Zone which is currently in place.

28 January 2026

- Following the receipt of official laboratory confirmation by the National Reference Laboratory, Pirbright, the Chief Veterinary Officer for Northern Ireland has confirmed the presence of Bluetongue virus serotype 3 (BTV-3) at a premises near Portavogie, County Down. This is the fifth confirmed BTV-3 infected premises.

05 March 2026

- Agriculture Ministers on both sides of the border have today moved to lift animal movement restrictions for breeding and production which were introduced following the Bluetongue outbreaks in both jurisdictions.
- Cross-border movements of Bluetongue (BTV) susceptible species like cattle or sheep for breeding and production can resume from **09:00 on Friday 06 March 2026**.
- In addition, the BTV Temporary Control Zone (TCZ) in place in County Down, will be lifted effective from the same time. This will mean that all animals, will be free to move within Northern Ireland.
- Further information is available at the DAERA Press Release here.
- Details of the derogation will be published by the EU Commission here.

15 April 2026

- DAERA announces that vaccination against Bluetongue Virus Serotype 3 (BTV-3) will now be permitted under a general licence, simplifying access to BTV-3 vaccines for livestock keepers across Northern Ireland.

- A Press Release on this can be viewed here.

- General licences for BTV-3 vaccination for private veterinarians and livestock keepers and further guidance can be accessed here.

16 April 2026

- The Ulster Farmers Union (UFU), alongside DAERA, hosted a webinar on Bluetongue. This is available to watch here.

28 April 2026

- We are now in the vector active period in Northern Ireland. Be vigilant for signs of Bluetongue (BTV). Further information on clinical signs can be found here.

- Please consult your private veterinary practitioner for advice on vaccinating your livestock against the threat of BTV-3.