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Bluetongue disease or catarrhal fever is a non-contagious, insect-borne, viral disease of ruminants, mainly sheep and less frequently cattle, goats, buffalo, deer, Blesbuck, White-tailed deer, elk, and antelope. It is caused by the Bluetongue virus (BTV) transmitted by the midge *Culicoides imicola*, *Culicoides variipennis* and other culicoids.

There are no reports of human transmission. The tongues of some humans with some types of heart disease may be blue, but this sign is not related to Bluetongue disease.

It has occurred in USA, Africa, Australia, the Middle East, Asia and Europe, but not in New Zealand.

In sheep it is an acute disease with high morbidity and mortality.

The incubation period is 5 to 20 days, and all symptoms usually develop within a month. The mortality rate is normally low, but it is high in susceptible breeds of sheep. In Africa, local breeds of sheep may have no mortality, but in imported breeds it may be up to 90 percent.

In cattle, goats and wild ruminants infection is usually asymptomatic despite high virus levels in blood. Red deer are an exception, and in them the disease may be as acute as in sheep.

### **Symptoms**

Signs are high fever, excessive salivation, swelling of the face and tongue and cyanosis of the tongue. Swellings of lips and tongue give the tongue a blue appearance, though this sign is confined to a minority of animals.

The incubation period is 5 to 20 days with signs developing within a month. The mortality rate is normally low except in susceptible breeds of sheep.

Major signs are high fever, excessive salivation, swelling of the face and tongue and cyanosis of the tongue. Swelling of the lips and tongue gives the tongue its typical blue appearance, though this sign is confined to a minority of the animals. Nasal symptoms may be prominent, with nasal discharge and stertorous respiration.

Some animals also develop foot lesions, beginning with coronitis, with consequent lameness. In sheep, this can lead to knee-walking. In cattle, constant changing of position of the feet gives bluetongue the nickname The Dancing Disease.[3] Torsion of the neck (opisthotonos or torticollis) is observed in severely affected animals.

Not all animals develop symptoms, but all those that do lose condition rapidly, and the sickest die within a week. For affected animals which do not die, recovery is very slow, lasting several months.

### **Treatment**

There is no effective treatment. Prevention is effected via quarantine, inoculation with live modified virus vaccine and control of the midges. Recovery is very slow.

### **Related Diseases**

African Horse Sickness is related to Bluetongue and is spread by midges (*Culicoides* species). It can kill up to 90% of the horses infected.

## **French Cattle Brought to WALES have Bluetongue**

17.sep.08

Western Mail

Sarah Miloudi

<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2008/09/17/french-cattle-brought-to-wales-have-bluetongue-91466-21835206/>

Two imported cattle have tested positive for the deadly animal disease Bluetongue, the Assembly Government revealed last night.

The animals, in a group of seven, were brought to Wales from the Limoges region of central France, and the disease was detected during post-import testing carried out on British soil.

Both animals tested positive for the type eight strain of the disease, and Assembly officials say a further case was last night being investigated.

Restrictions have already been put in place at the premises in Ruthin in Denbighshire, where were the cattle were being housed. Last night, Wales' chief veterinary officer Dr Christianne Glossop spoke out about the number of animals being imported to England and Wales.

“Over the past few weeks there have been far too many instances of imported animals testing positive for Bluetongue in England and now in Wales,” Dr Glossop said.

“This highlights the importance of farmers considering carefully whether it is necessary to import animals from Bluetongue infected areas.

“While current European Union legislation allows the import of animals from protection zones in mainland Europe, there are risks in doing this as these cases show.”

Farming industry insiders have estimated the number of Bluetongue cases in France to stand at 7,000, with some fearing the number could rise rapidly to 10,000 within a matter of weeks.

Vaughan Jones, ONZM Queen's honour, for services to the farming industry.

Dairying 99% Honours 1948. Waikato Most Improved Dairy Farm Award 1959. M.Mkt.I.

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