# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Bluetongue Virus Serotype 3 (BTV-3)** |
| **DATE** | **02 October 2024** |
| **BY** | **Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs** |

The first case of Bluetongue serotype 3 (BTV-3) in Wales was confirmed on the evening of 27 September by the Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer (DCVO). It was found in three sheep moved to a holding in Gwynedd from the east of England. Bluetongue is caused by a virus that is primarily transmitted by certain species of biting midges. It affects ruminants (such as cattle, goats, sheep and deer) and camelids (such as alpacas and llamas). It does not affect people or food safety.

On Saturday 28September, in line with our bluetongue control plan, the three infected sheep were culled and disposed of to reduce the risk of Bluetongue virus transmission to local midges. The sheep have been valued and the owner will receive compensation. The sheep were moved to Wales before restrictions were put in place in England. Welsh Government policy is not to allow movement of susceptible animals from the restricted zone in England, except to designated abattoirs.

Since the case was reported, extensive sampling and laboratory testing has been undertaken by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and the Pirbright Institute respectively. All the sheep moved onto the holding at the same time as the infected animals have tested negative. The final test results for the sheep and cattle resident on the holding were received today. All tested negative.

Given the negative test results for the resident livestock, the DCVO’s interim conclusion is that Bluetongue is unlikely to be circulating in the local midge population. Further sampling and testing will be done over the coming weeks to confirm this assessment.

The holding will remain under restrictions, with no livestock moves on or off permitted, pending further test results. At this stage, we will not impose wider restrictions in the area.

My policy goal remains to keep bluetongue out of Wales, for the benefit of our animals and of those who keep them.

I appreciate that many in the farming community will be concerned about Bluetongue. Dealing successfully with a disease incursion such as this requires co-operation and collaboration between farmers, vets and the various government agencies involved. I would like to thank farmers in Wales for their vigilance, and I am grateful to all concerned for the swift action taken to deal with this incident.

Animal keepers have been encouraged to source stock responsibly, remain vigilant for the signs of Bluetongue and to report any suspect cases to Animal Plant Health Agency immediately. We appreciate the assistance of the livestock and veterinary sectors and others in communicating these messages to the wider industry.