

Bluetongue vaccination Q&A



1. Why must I vaccinate my sheep and cattle against bluetongue disease? The Scottish Government and leaders of the farming industry have decided that the best way to protect Scotland from the risks of a bluetongue epidemic is through a compulsory national campaign of vaccination.

2. Which animals should be vaccinated against bluetongue? The vaccination of all cattle and sheep over three months of age is compulsory in Scotland, subject to some limited exemptions. Vaccination of goats, deer, other ruminant and camelids species is not compulsory, but is strongly encouraged.

3. When can I vaccinate my stock against bluetongue? Bluetongue vaccine will be available from the 3rd November 2008. The keepers of all eligible stock are then free to vaccinate their animals at any convenient time thereafter, as long as vaccination is completed by the 30th April 2009.

4. Which sheep and cattle are exempt from bluetongue vaccination? Animals under three months of age should not be vaccinated. Animals destined for slaughter before 21st May 2009 are exempt from vaccination. Animals which are destined to go direct to slaughter before six months of age are also exempt from vaccination, even if this will occur after 30th April. Animals on Shetland are exempted from compulsory vaccination unless they are intended to go to mainland Scotland or for export outside a BTv8 Protection Zone.

5. What about animals that are too young to be vaccinated before 30th April? These animals should be fully vaccinated before they reach six months of age or before they move from their holding of origin, unless they are destined to go direct to slaughter (see above).

6. What about animals born after 30th April? These animals should be fully vaccinated after three months of age, before they reach six months of age or before they move from their holding of origin.

7. Where do I obtain bluetongue vaccine? Vaccine can be obtained from your veterinary surgeon. Veterinary practices will distribute official BTv8 vaccine order forms to all their clients. In the event that you do not receive an order form, you should contact the practice to obtain one.

8. Is bluetongue vaccine safe? Any vaccine has to be assessed for safety and efficacy by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate before it is authorised for use. Millions of doses of bluetongue vaccine have been used throughout Europe without any serious adverse reactions being reported. Modern manufacturing processes mean that these vaccines are both safe and very effective.

9. Does any milk or meat withdrawal time apply to bluetongue vaccination? No milk or meat withdrawal is required after administering bluetongue vaccine.

10. What dose of bluetongue vaccine is required for my stock? To become protected against bluetongue disease, sheep require a single injection of 1ml of vaccine and cattle require two 1ml doses of vaccine, given four weeks apart. Keepers of goats, deer, other ruminant and camelids species should contact their vet for advice on vaccination dosage.

11. How many doses of vaccine are in a bottle? Bluetongue vaccine is supplied in 100ml (100 doses) and 50 ml (50 doses) bottles. If smaller quantities of vaccine are required your vet should be able to supply this in a syringe or small bottle upon request.

12. How should bluetongue vaccine be stored?

Bluetongue vaccine should always be stored in a refrigerator between 2° and 8°C degrees, and when ready to be used it should be kept cool at all times.

13. How quickly must I use the vaccine? Once bottles of bluetongue vaccine have been opened, the contents must be used within eight hours. Domestic refrigerators are not always able to maintain constant low temperatures and so the best advice is to purchase vaccine shortly before it is due to be used. Unopened bottles of bluetongue vaccine can be stored at between 2° and 8°C over longer periods. However you may only hold vaccine on farm for a maximum of 35 days before use. Vaccine held on farm for more than 35 days must be destroyed.

14. How soon after vaccination will my animals be protected from bluetongue disease? Full immunity to disease develops three weeks after completion of the vaccination course.

15. Can I vaccinate my own stock? Animal keepers are free to vaccinate their own animals. However, if an animal is to be exported to a region outside a BTv8 Protection Zone, vaccination by a veterinary surgeon is required, as well as a veterinary certificate. If this is likely, please contact your vet to discuss.

16. How do I administer bluetongue vaccine? Bluetongue vaccine is given by injection by the subcutaneous route i.e. under the skin. Use a multidose injector or multiple needles and syringes. If you are sharing a multidose injector with a neighbour make sure you change the needle before using it on anyone else's animals.

17. What happens if I do not vaccinate my animals? Vaccination is a legal requirement and any failure to vaccinate sheep or cattle is an illegal act which can invoke penalties of a maximum of £5,000 and six months in prison. The Scottish Government will monitor all orders for bluetongue vaccine that are made. From this it will be possible to identify those holdings for which vaccine has not been ordered. If any required vaccination has not been carried out action will be taken to ensure compliance.

18. What monitoring will be done? The Scottish Government will use the vaccine order forms to monitor uptake by individual holdings. Further, testing of some sheep and cattle will be done later to verify that vaccination has taken place. If any required vaccination has not been carried out action will then be taken to ensure compliance.

19. What is the price of the vaccine? It is anticipated that the vaccine will be on sale from veterinary practices at approximately £44 to £58 (+VAT) per 100ml bottle. The price of the 50ml bottles that will be available later in the season has yet to be confirmed.

20. How long will I need to vaccinate my stock? A revaccination booster will be required every year until further notice. The aim of the vaccination campaign is to prevent the disease from establishing itself in the midge and animal populations in Scotland. The Vaccination Campaign will continue over the next few years until an exit strategy has been developed.

21. Where can I get more advice on bluetongue vaccination? Your own vet should be able to provide help and advice on most aspects of bluetongue vaccination. Further details of the vaccination campaign are available on the Scottish Government web site at: www.scotland.gov.uk/bluetongue