

Bluetongue: Protection From Vector Attack

Introduction

1. Animals are permitted to move out of a Bluetongue Protection Zone or Surveillance Zone if they fulfil at least one of the conditions set out in Annex III of the Commission Regulation (EC) No. 1266/2007. Some of these conditions allow movements of animals that have been protected from vector attack:

- Animals must be protected against vector attack for at least 60 days before movement. Or:
- Animals must be protected against vector attack for at least 28 days before movement; negative results from a serological test performed at least 28 days after the start of protection. Or:
- Animals must be protected against vector attack for at least 14 days before movement; negative results from a test for virus carried out at least 14 days after protection started.

In order to meet the condition of protection against vector attack, animals must be kept in vector-proof accommodation for the entire period of protection. While insecticide spray is a useful tool for the short-term control of vectors, for example during transport, on its own it cannot provide effective protection from vector attack over the longer periods required as a condition for an exit ban exemption.

2. This leaflet sets out the requirements for vector-proof accommodation that **must be fulfilled** in order to move animals out of bluetongue Restricted Zones in Scotland under the Annex III conditions listed above. Similar requirements are in place for movements out of Zones in England and Wales. These requirements involve significant investment in adaptations to livestock buildings and in the ongoing management of livestock kept within midge-proof accommodation. It is therefore suggested that the construction and use of such accommodation is only likely to be worthwhile for very high value livestock for which other means of exiting the restriction zone (i.e. vaccination, natural immunity or movement during a vector free period) are not an option.

Construction of a vector-proof facility

3. A vector proof unit must:
- Be a compartment within a building or container
 - Have no gaps in the construction greater than 1 mm in width.
 - Be sufficiently robust that the animals to be quarantined are not able to cause damage that would create a breach of protection from vectors.

- Provide enough space, light, ventilation and other features necessary to safeguard the welfare of the animals throughout the quarantine period.
 - Have all openings protected by filters or mesh impregnated with insecticide and with a maximum mesh size no greater than 1.6mm².
 - Have a double door entry system whereby at least one of the doors (inner or outer) is closed at all times.
 - Contain at least two working ultraviolet insect traps.
4. Where possible the facility should be located away from animal housing and yards that are likely midge breeding sites. The area surrounding the animal accommodation must be kept as free of manure to minimize the likelihood of midges accidentally entering the building trapped on person and in feed etc.

Note: An open-sided barn is unlikely to be adequate. A disused refrigerated vehicle body or a shipping container may be suitable for smaller animals. Openings for light and ventilation must be provided, including fan ventilation if necessary.

Openings

5. The filter or mesh used to cover openings must be soaked or sprayed with synthetic pyrethroid insecticide before the facility is put into use and at intervals of no more than 30 days thereafter or in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions if they specify a shorter interval.

Note: Suitable insecticides would be those approved for the treatment of buildings (see below).

Entry system

6. Each door of the double-door entry system must be fitted so that there is a gap around it of no more than 1mm, or be otherwise constructed to prevent midges getting through (e.g. draught proofing foam strips impregnated with insecticide). The space between the doors must be large enough to accommodate any person, animal or object likely to enter or leave the facility during the period of protection from vector attack to enable either the inner or the outer door to be closed at all times.

Note: In order to minimise traffic through the entrance, piped drinking water must be provided and enough feed and bedding should be stored within the vector proof unit to supply the animals through the complete protection from vector attack period. If possible, storage for manure should also be provided within the facility.

Insect traps

7. At least one ultraviolet insect trap must be positioned in the space between the double entry doors, placed no higher than at head height. At least one further trap must be positioned in the animal holding room. Both traps must be operational at all times during the protection from vector attack period.

Note: Ultraviolet insect traps must be turned on prior to the animals entering the animal holding room and must be checked regularly for dead insects to ensure that the protection is working. A period of darkness is required for effective trap operation.

Management of a vector proof facility

Preparation

8. Before animals are placed in the facility, it must be cleansed and disinfected and treated with insecticide, paying particular attention to cracks or joints in the construction where midges may enter. It must be checked carefully to ensure that it remains sealed and that any apertures remain covered with mesh that is in a good state of repair and regularly treated with insecticide.

9. The animals must be treated with insecticide before they are introduced to the facility. The period of protection from vectors begins when the last animal enters the facility.

Livestock Management

10. The animals must be checked daily for signs of disease. Any signs of bluetongue or other notifiable disease must be reported immediately to the local Animal Health Divisional Veterinary Manager.

11. Movement of people and objects into and out of the facility should be kept to a minimum. When entering the facility, the outer door must be closed, clothing brushed down, and the person should wait for 1 minute, standing near to the ultraviolet trap before opening the inner door. On leaving the facility the inner door must be closed before opening the outer one. Both doors should remain securely closed at all other times. The outer door should be protected against unauthorised access through the use of a warning notice or a lock or both. The need to evacuate people and animals in the event of an emergency must be considered.

Note: Normally a single person plus a deputy should be nominated to care for the animals. There is no need to avoid contact with non-protected animals but a normal standard of biosecurity should be practised depending on the health status of the livestock.

12. If an animal is removed from the unit for any reason, it may not re-enter or be replaced with an alternative animal without restarting the full period of protection required. When moving an animal, precautions must be taken to avoid the entry of midges, for example through the spraying of insecticide and minimising the time that the outer door is open or through moving the animal when the temperature is below 5°C or during the middle of the day when vector activity is reduced.

Note: It is unlikely that lactating animals could be successfully protected unless they can be milked or suckled within the facility.

Record keeping

13. Each occasion when insecticide or any other veterinary treatment, including testing, is undertaken must be recorded in accordance with normal statutory requirements.

14. The date and time when each animal is added to or removed from the vector proof unit must be recorded and it must be clearly stated when the protection from vector period began. Animals must be identified as required by the relevant legislation.

General Information

15. Official veterinary certification is necessary for animals consigned to another country. Contact your local DVM for more details on export requirements.

16. It may be easier to maintain a high level of protection from vector attack if the period of protection is shorter. It is therefore advisable to consider moving animals under one of the Annex III conditions that requires 14 or 28 days protection in combination with testing.

17. Where sourcing livestock from high-risk areas is unavoidable, it is the responsibility of the buyer to ensure that whatever the movement conditions are, they have been met by the vendor that they intend to purchase from.

Guidance on insecticide treatment

18. Insecticides must be used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Spraying at rates beyond the manufacturer's instructions will not improve efficacy, but will increase the risk of groundwater and surface water pollution, with environmental consequences.

Livestock

19. Only insecticides with appropriate marketing authorisations may be used on animals. They must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, including the interval between repeat treatments. The most commonly used active ingredient/formulation available is a synthetic pyrethroid pour-on.

Buildings

20. When required as described above, the space and surfaces inside of the quarantine facility animal compartment must be treated with a residual insecticide spray licensed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – see www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/bluebook/section08.pdf.