

# What is Bluetongue?

**Bluetongue** is a viral disease spread by insects which affects all ruminants, mainly sheep and cattle.

**Bluetongue** virus cannot be transmitted directly between animals. It is spread between animals only by midges (of *Culicoides* species), when a midge bites an infected animal and passes the infection to an uninfected animal.

**Bluetongue** does not affect humans so there are no human or public health implications.

**Bluetongue** can have significant economic impact in terms of on-farm losses due to death, and reduced productivity. There may also be effects on our ability to trade.

This leaflet provides:

- Information on symptoms of Bluetongue
- Advice to herd and flock owners on what you should do if you suspect your animals have the disease



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

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## All herd and flock keepers should:

Be vigilant - especially in the case of sheep.

- Make yourself aware of the clinical signs of **Bluetongue**
- Monitor your animals carefully



## Clinical signs in sheep can include:

- Fever
- Swelling of the head and neck
- Lameness
- Mouth ulcerations
- Drooling
- Haemorrhages in the skin and other tissues
- Respiratory problems
- High mortality rate
- Discoloration and swelling of the tongue (rare)



## Clinical signs in cattle:

Although **Bluetongue** often causes no apparent illness in cattle or goats, cattle can display clinical signs including:

- Conjunctivitis (red and runny eyes)
- Swelling and ulceration of the mouth
- Swelling of head and neck
- Saliva drooling from the mouth
- Nasal discharge
- Swollen teats
- Tiredness
- Fever

**Bluetongue** is a notifiable disease, so if you suspect any signs of the disease you must report this immediately to your local Divisional Veterinary Office.

Further information available at: [www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)  
or contact the **DAERA helpline: 0300 200 7840**