

Update for the Scottish Livestock Industry Bluetongue Disease Control Strategy for Scotland in 2026

2026 control strategy and the changes from the 2025 controls

Response to cases of bluetongue

Efforts towards maintaining Scotland's bluetongue-free status using various controls appear to have been successful thus far and this strategy will continue unless there is a fundamental change in circumstances. There is hope that we can continue to remain bluetongue-free by dealing with any incursions, providing that option remains cost effective and the benefits outweigh any negative implications. The critical factor affecting policy is whether the virus is found to be in home-bred animals or in local circulation.

For instance, if a case of bluetongue in Scotland results from an animal(s) that has been sourced from a bluetongue disease control zone, the animal(s) could be humanely culled, or immediately repatriated back to the bluetongue Restricted Zone under licence. Surveillance would be conducted to ascertain whether the incursion resulted in local circulation.

High risk period and duration of controls

SG policy colleagues recognise that the uncertainty of the period at which controls are in place is a significant hurdle for industry, particularly for the scheduling of important annual activities, such as sales and shows. Therefore, relaxation of controls will occur earlier than in 2025, so it is hoped that industry will be able to react and alleviate impacts to important routine activity.

In 2025, rather than relying on an official "seasonally low vector period" for seasonality of BTV prevention policy, we used environmental data in combination with statistical, epidemiological evidence and veterinary risk assessments to determine when conditions in Scotland were deemed unsuitable for transmission of bluetongue through the midge vector. This resulted in the prior announcement of the low transmission season with relaxation of some controls on 21 September 2025.

For the 2026 BTV season, we are pre-announcing the dates when full controls will be in place, which should remain to be the case unless there is a significant deviation to typical environmental conditions, or, if the bluetongue situation in Scotland changes before then. The proposed dates below follow the same rationale as before, but taking into account the evolution of the disease in the UK. We will continue to monitor all these factors closely and we remind farmers and vets that diseases are dynamic in nature and often unpredictable. It needs to be recognised that we are in effect using the past to predict the future and doing so increases the risk of incursion, when compared to waiting for the information retrospectively before allowing relaxations, but we consider that this is proportionate to the additional risk.

Start of the active transmission season:

01 June 2026 (earliest date additional controls will come into force)

Based on the Pirbright Institute temperature work (see Figure 1), the 1st of June was determined the earliest date midges can bite and complete an incubation period in Scotland during the 17 years in study.

The later we introduce controls, the higher the risk that midges can find an infected animal in Scotland (moved from a RZ without full controls), bite and complete incubation, but the difference in magnitude of risk, week on week, is negligible. The average temperatures rise slowly, and competent midges in the RZ would require several weeks before completing an incubation if they found newly infected animals with overwintered virus, so the prevalence in the RZ would also grow quite slowly, coming to a peak when temperatures are highest (~September). So, the difference in risk between mid May, mid June or end of June would be much smaller than between July and September for example. The introduction of controls on 01 June would be a marginal and tolerable increase in risk.

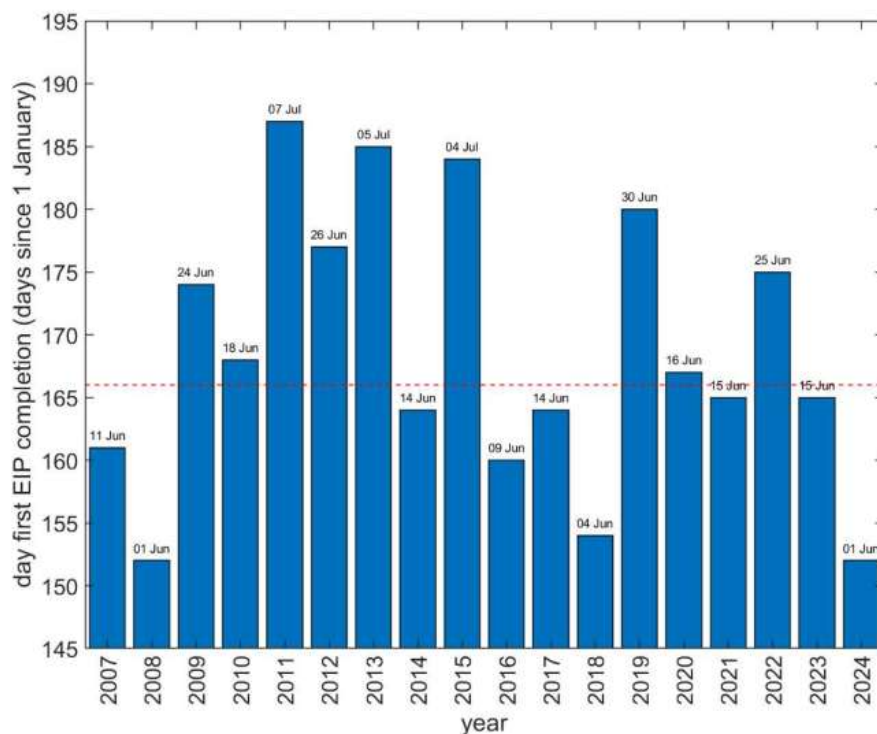


Figure 1. Earliest day in Scotland on which a midge could have completed its extrinsic incubation period and so transmission of bluetongue virus could potentially occur for 2007-2024. The red dotted line indicates the median day.

Start of low transmission season:

09 September 2026 (latest date when controls can be minimised)

Feedback received from key industry representatives indicated that a return of control relaxations should be at the earliest possible stage based on scientific evidence (see Figure 2). However, there is a risk that vectors may in certain areas are still able to spread disease and that fresh infection might be detected late in the year.

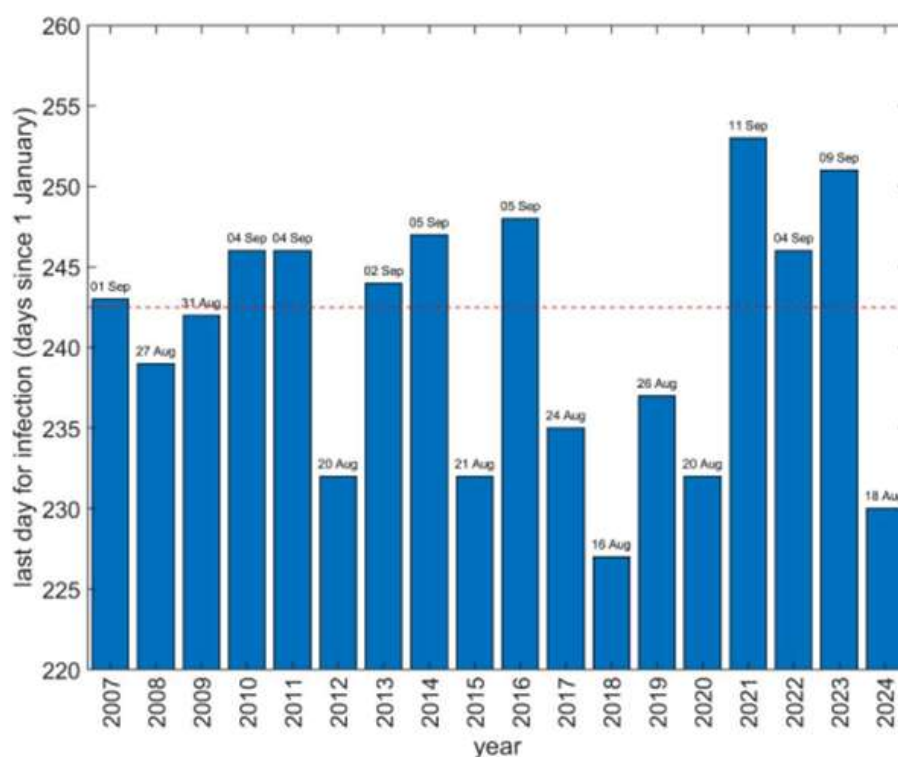


Figure 2. Last day in Scotland on which infection of a midge would need to occur for it to complete its extrinsic incubation period. The red dotted line indicates the median day.

Vaccination

- It is strongly recommended that all bovines moving to Scotland to live, from or through a RZ (or other bluetongue zone – construe further references to RZ accordingly), be fully vaccinated with Bultavo-3 with 21 days elapsing since the final dose was administered. There will be no requirement for PCR testing to move fully vaccinated cattle treated with Bultavo-3 from a BTV RZ to Scotland.
- It is strongly recommended that all bluetongue susceptible animals (sheep, cattle, goats, camelids, and other ruminants) are vaccinated for BTV-3.
- Vaccination does not provide an exclusion for pre-movement testing, unless for cattle fully vaccinated with Bultavo-3 according to product label, with 21 days elapsing since completion of the primary vaccine/booster course.
- Policy will react to any new assurances/further validated data from vaccine manufacturers.

Movement to slaughter

- No pre-movement test required, but movements may only go to a designated slaughterhouse and must meet the requirements of the general licence.
- A relaxation of dawn till dusk restrictions: animals that cannot be processed by operators on the day of arrival at an abattoir premises may be housed overnight

and processed as soon as possible the following day. It is expected that only a small percentage of animals will require to be held overnight and operators must report overnight lairage levels and relaxations may be lifted if deemed to be excessive.

- Moves must be direct to the slaughterhouse must be direct after leaving the RZ

Movement to live – RZ to Scotland

- Sheep, goats, camelids, and other ruminants will require a PCR test within 7 days of the move, from 01 June 2026 at the earliest until 9 September 2026.
- Cattle vaccinated **with Bultavo-3** and with 21 days elapsed since completing the full course of primary vaccination may move to Scotland from a RZ without a PCR pre-movement test.
- Cattle vaccinated with other products (Syvazul/Bluevac) or cattle that are unvaccinated will require a PCR test within 7 days of the move.
- Batch PCR pre-movement (statistical sampling) testing of a consignment with large numbers from a single source farm may be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be under specific licence conditions.

Moves to shows/markets – Scotland to a RZ and returning to Scotland

- Animals do not require a pre-movement test to enter the show/market in the Restricted Zone, but should be isolated upon their return to Scotland, and it is recommended that they are post-movement tested.
- If the animal spends more than four days in the Restricted Zone, it will require a pre-movement test in the Restricted Zone with negative results received prior to a move back to Scotland.
- Cattle, fully vaccinated with Bultavo-3 before they enter the RZ, are exempt from PCR testing before or after they leave the RZ for this sort of movement.

Germinal products

- Further analysis of the risks presented by germinal products and bluetongue are ongoing. Consideration is being given to the alignment of domestic market testing requirements with current export testing conditions.