

## **Bluetongue confirmed in the Netherlands**

First occurrence in northern Europe

18 August 2006

The European Commission has been informed of a confirmed outbreak of bluetongue in sheep on two farms in southern Netherlands near the border with Belgium and Germany (see Map). According to news media reports, there are 12 additional Dutch farms where the disease is suspected. Further investigations and laboratory testing are being performed at the Community Reference Laboratory in Pirbright (UK) to identify the strain involved.

Bluetongue is an insect-borne viral disease that affects domestic and wild ruminants, particularly sheep. The disease is transmitted by biting midges which are prevalent in warmer regions; it is not spread by direct contact between animals, or through meat or milk, and does not infect humans. Bluetongue is endemic in southern Europe, including parts of Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Greece and Turkey, and outbreaks have reported annually throughout the Mediterranean basin since 1998. The bluetongue cases reported in the Netherlands are the first reported occurrences of this disease in northern Europe.

Dutch authorities have banned trade of live ruminants and ruminant semen, embryos and ova, and have halted all movement of ruminants and their live products within a 20-km zone around the outbreak. Protection zones (100-km-radius) and surveillance zones (50-km-radius) will be established around the infected farms.

While bluetongue presence in the Netherlands is a significant event for northern Europe, the direct and indirect impacts on U.S. agricultural resources are probably minimal. North American strains of bluetongue virus are endemic in the U.S., and imports of ruminants from Europe are restricted because of the presence of BSE. In addition, animals from other bluetongue-infected countries are quarantined and tested on entry into U.S. ports.

A summary of bluetongue in the Mediterranean basin is available online at: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cei/taf/emergingdiseasenotice\\_files/bluetongue\\_medbasin\\_ednotice\\_sep\\_04\\_files/bluetongue\\_med\\_basin\\_jan\\_05\\_update.htm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/ceah/cei/taf/emergingdiseasenotice_files/bluetongue_medbasin_ednotice_sep_04_files/bluetongue_med_basin_jan_05_update.htm)  
Another source is the Proceedings of the 3rd International Bluetongue Symposium, available online at: [http://www.te.izs.it/vet\\_italiana/index.html](http://www.te.izs.it/vet_italiana/index.html)

*Sources: European Commission, Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General IP/06/1112; ProMED*

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**Location of confirmed bluetongue outbreaks, 18 August 2006**

