

From the Office of the
Minister of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs



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

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Jim Allister MLA
38 Henry Street
Harryville
Ballymena
Co Antrim
BT42 3AH

karen.cameron@party.niassembly.gov.uk

DAERA Private Office
First Floor
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Sydenham Intake
Belfast
BT3 9ED
Telephone: 028 9052 4140
Email: private.office@daera-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: COR-1036-2024

Date: 12 March 2024

Dear Jim

Blue Tongue restrictions

Thank you for your email of 15 February 2024, regarding the restrictions on movements of live ruminants from Great Britain (GB) to Northern Ireland (NI) following the confirmation of Bluetongue Virus (BTV) in England.

As outlined in the previous replies from my Department to you on this matter, due to BTV confirmations in GB, live ruminant animals cannot move to NI as the relevant Export Health Certificate (EHC) cannot be signed by GB Official Veterinarians (OV). As a result of the Withdrawal Agreement and under the Windsor Framework EHC attestation is required for GB to NI animal moves and the eligibility criteria is detailed within those. The impacted EHCs have, therefore, been removed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Defra has been engaging with colleagues from the devolved administrations and industry across GB and NI on the requirements for recognition from the EU for BTV regionalisation. If approved, this would result in the areas outside of any disease control zones being marked as disease free and would therefore allow the resumption of live ruminant movements from GB to NI and the European Union (EU).

However, it is important to highlight that the impacts on both industry and government of introducing disease control zones with the associated surveillance to meet the requirements of regionalisation are very significant. GB policy colleagues are currently formulating advice to their respective Ministers to agree next steps. Should regionalisation not be pursued moves of live ruminants from GB to NI/EU would remain suspended for a considerable period of two years or more.

My officials will continue to work closely with our counterparts in Defra and across the other devolved administrations to keep the disease situation under review to include the impact of any decisions on next steps. We will also continue to work collaboratively with industry stakeholders to provide support and guidance to NI herd and flock keepers.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

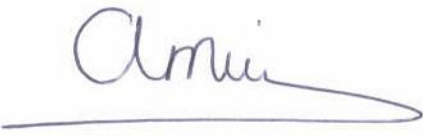
INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Standard

I am aware of a meeting that my officials had with NI stakeholders 8 February 2024, which can be summarised in that priority should be given to ensuring that NI remains BTV free and that we work together on a collaborative basis to mitigate against any possible incursion of the disease, to protect the health and welfare of NI's herds and flocks.

I understand that this is a frustration for NI keepers who had purchased livestock in GB which cannot now be certified by a GB OV. However, protecting the NI herd and sheep industry from epizootic diseases such as BTV is a key priority my Department.

I hope this clarifies the current position in respect of protecting NI from this devastating epizootic disease.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "A. Muir". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

ANDREW MUIR MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs