

# Bluetongue virus zone in Victoria

13 October 2017

*A temporary bluetongue virus (BTV) zone has been introduced in northern Victoria on 13 October 2017. The zone was established in response to positive results to routine BTV testing in cattle destined for export.*

*The zone will be in place whilst surveillance activities are undertaken. Results to these activities will assist in determining how and when livestock exports to the countries involved can resume.*

## WHAT ARE BTV ZONES?

Bluetongue is a viral disease that infects ruminants, including cattle, sheep, goats, camelids and buffalo. A number of BTV serotypes (strains) are present in northern and parts of eastern Australia. These serotypes have not caused clinical disease in commercial Australian livestock to date.

BTV zoning is an internationally recognised means of defining where BTV is present. This is particularly important for the export of livestock internationally. Countries that import significant numbers of livestock from Australia require that they come from BTV-free zones.

The National Arbovirus Monitoring Program (NAMP) monitors the distribution of economically important insect-borne viruses such as BTV. As BTV is spread by insect vectors, the distribution of BTV is likely to vary depending on seasonal conditions. BTV zones change if evidence of BTV is detected in the BTV-free zone. It is imperative to maintain these zones accurately and transparently to protect live animal export markets.

## WHY IS VICTORIA CREATING A ZONE?

Routine pre-export BTV testing recently detected several cattle in a herd in northern Victoria that had been exposed to the virus. Although the cattle showed no clinical signs of infection with BTV, this is the first evidence of exposure to the virus in Victoria.

A temporary BTV zone has been implemented consistent with national arbovirus monitoring procedures.

During this period, surveillance testing will be undertaken to determine the extent of exposure to the virus and, if possible, the initial source of transmission into Victoria.

## WHERE IS THE BTV ZONE IN VICTORIA?

**Figure 1** indicates national BTV zones following the introduction of a 50 km radius zone of possible transmission around the property of detection, and a further 50 km radius buffer zone, while further investigations are undertaken. Transmission zones are those where there has been evidence of BTV activity within the previous two years. The BTV free zones are where monitoring has found no evidence of BTV activity within the previous two years.

**Figure 1.** Bluetongue virus zone map after implementation of the zone of possible transmission and buffer zone in Victoria. Yellow = BTV Transmission Zone, grey = BTV Buffer Zone, green = BTV Free Zone. Source: National Arbovirus Monitoring Program, 13 October 2017.



## WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF ZONING?

The introduction of a temporary BTV transmission zone in Victoria (**Figures 2 and 3**) means that livestock from within the zone will not be eligible for export to countries that require animals to be sourced from bluetongue free zones.

There are no changes to conditions for moving cattle from this temporary zone to other parts of Victoria, or elsewhere in Australia.

The strains of BTV currently found in Australia are considered to have a very low likelihood of causing disease. No clinical cases of BTV have been observed in commercial herds or flocks in Australia.

No risk is posed by BTV to human health or food safety.

**Figure 2.** Overview map of Victoria, showing the location of the combined zone of potential transmission and buffer zone.



The temporary BTV transmission zone will be in place for 30 days. The requirement for the zone will be re-assessed when results to surveillance activities have been obtained.

Monitoring will continue under the NAMP with the aim of resuming exports of livestock from this zone as soon as possible.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have further questions regarding this, please contact an Agriculture Victoria Veterinary or Animal Health Officer by visiting your local Agriculture Victoria office or telephoning **136 186**.

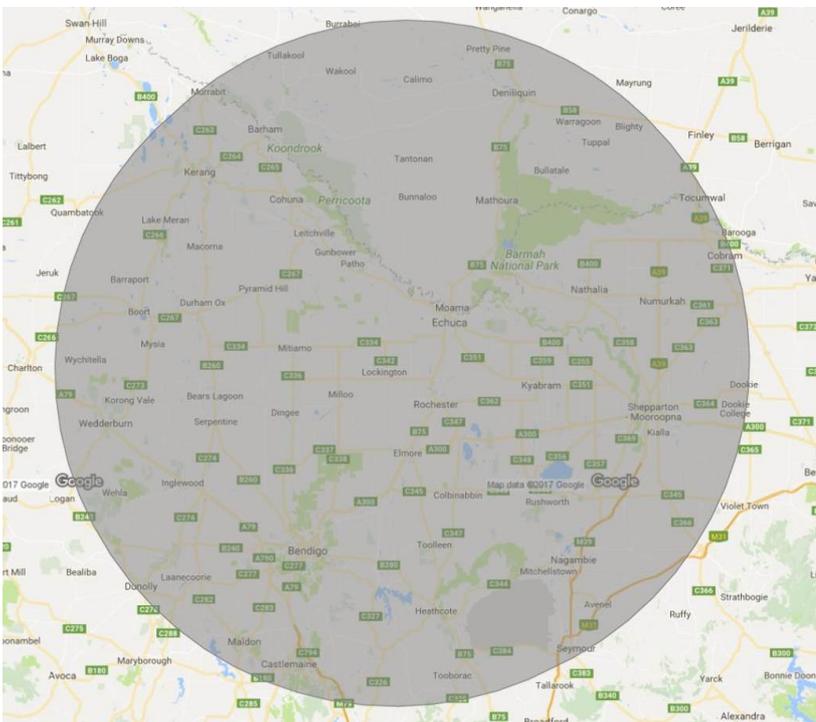
## ACCESSIBILITY

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please telephone 136 186.

## DISCLAIMER

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

## HOW LONG IS THIS ZONING TO BE IN PLACE?



**Figure 3.** Map showing the location of the combined zone of potential transmission and buffer zone in northern Victoria.