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Hutton researchers hold bluetongue workshops

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Reporter

Researchers at The James Hutton Institute are set to host a series of workshops to better understand the issues and threats bluetongue virus (a notifiable disease) presents to livestock keepers in Scotland.

The workshops, which are funded by the Centre of Expertise on Animal Disease Outbreaks (EPIC) and the Scottish Government, will focus on the impact bluetongue virus has on farmers, smallholders, crofters and their businesses.

As of Saturday, October 3, the Bluetongue Restricted Zone was extended from covering parts of south-west Scotland to cover the whole of Scotland.

The Scottish Government has detailed what the decision will mean practically for the agriculture industry at large:

The change means the movement licences currently required to move susceptible livestock, such as cattle, sheep and other ruminants, into, within and out of the South West Scotland zone will no longer be necessary, as the whole of Scotland will share the same disease status. This is expected to make trading considerably more straightforward for farmers, hauliers and auction markets ahead of the busy autumn trading period. www.gov.scot/news/bluetongue-restricted-zone-extended-to-cover-all-of-scotland/

Multiple cases of the disease have been found across Scotland, affecting farms from Aberdeenshire to Dumfries.

Dr Claire Hardy, a social scientist at the Hutton, said: "This is a worrying time for livestock keepers across Scotland especially those who are not often consulted, the workshops and meetings are being held to give Scottish livestock keepers the opportunity to have their voices heard."

Livestock keepers interested in taking part are invited to attend one of three workshops taking place this autumn:

- The Scottish Smallholding and Countryside Festival at Ingleston, Edinburgh - Saturday, October 17;
- The crofters' workshop in Ullapool Village Hall, Market Street – Monday, November 2;
- The young farmers' meeting at Thainstone Mart in Inverurie – Monday 30 November/Tuesday 1 December.

For further details or to register interest in attending, contact research assistant Carol Kyle (carol.kyle@hutton.ac.uk).

Those keen to share their thoughts but unable to attend the workshop can also complete a short survey online by visiting hutton.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3fQcXvNj13zWpHo.



The bluetongue virus workshops are open to livestock keepers. (The James Hutton Institute)

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