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Researchers set to hold bluetongue workshops for livestock keepers

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Researchers at The James Hutton Institute are set to host a series of workshops to better understand the issues and threats bluetongue virus 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 decision was made after consultation and agreement with the agriculture industry. However, little is known about the perceptions of young farmers, small farmers/smallholders and crofters and how these changes might affect their businesses.

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."

The findings from these workshops will be shared with policy makers during and prior to outbreaks, helping with future decisions on disease control.

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

- Scottish Smallholding and Countryside Festival at Ingliston, Edinburgh on Saturday October 17.
- Crofters' workshop in Ullapool Village Hall, Market Street on Monday November 2.
- Young farmers' meeting at Thainstone Mart in Inverurie on Monday November 30/Tuesday December 1.

For further details or to register interest in attending, contact carol.kyle@hutton.ac.uk. Those keen to share their thoughts but unable to attend a workshop can also complete a survey online.

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workshops will be held across Scotland



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