

Agriculture - Guidance on Farm Visits and SHADs following an outbreak of Foot and Mouth or Bluetongue

SIM 01/2007/08

Target Audience:

**FOD Inspectors and HSAOs dealing with agriculture
Other HSE staff planning to visit agriculture premises**

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Introduction

1 The Sector has received a number of enquiries in recent weeks from different parts of HSE, seeking advice about visiting farms or accessing farmland in areas outside the current restriction and surveillance zones.

Background

2 FOD issued an instruction on 6 August 2007, following the announcement by DEFRA of an outbreak of FMD in the Surrey area on 3 August. Inspectors were instructed not to carry out proactive visits to farms throughout Great Britain where there might be susceptible animals, until further notice. It also stated that if essential reactive visits were required, the operational procedures for biosecurity (contained in SIM 01/2002/06) should be followed.

3 On 10 September, a further outbreak of FMD was announced. Since then, a number of isolated cases of BTV have also been declared which have led to further restrictions being imposed by DEFRA including the introduction of new FMD Risk Areas and Low Risk Areas (in addition to the existing Protection and Surveillance Zones) and BTV Control and Protection Zones.

4 Given the increasing number of enquiries as to whether farm visits and Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs) should go ahead, the Sector has produced this SIM to clarify the position.

Advice to visiting staff

5 As at 8 October 2007, there are various FMD and BTV protection zones in place, each with different restrictions in relation to animal movements, gatherings etc. A map showing restricted areas can be found on DEFRA's website. By way of example, the current map is attached at Annex 1.

6 The DEFRA website also includes a postcode finder that will identify the zone within which a given location/farm falls.

7 The sections below provide advice on the type of farm visits which should take place in the various FMD and BTV restriction zones.

8 In all cases, if a farm visit is required, operational procedures on biosecurity (detailed in SIM/01/2002/06) should be followed.

Foot and mouth disease

9 Visits within FMD Protection Zones:

- i. No routine visits should take place.
- ii. If essential visits are necessary (e.g. to investigate fatal or serious accidents) then authorisation must first be obtained from DEFRA's Divisional Veterinary Manager (contact details available on the DEFRA website).

10 Visits within FMD Surveillance Zones:

- i. No routine visits should take place.
- ii. If visits are deemed necessary (e.g. to investigate fatal or serious accidents), staff should discuss the matter with their Band 1 and 2 managers, and reach an agreed decision on how HSE will respond.

11 Visits within FMD Risk Areas (but outside Protection and Surveillance Zones):

- i. No routine visits should take place to livestock (cattle, sheep, pig or similar) farms.
- ii. If visits to livestock farms are deemed necessary (e.g. to investigate fatal or serious accidents), staff should discuss the matter with their Band 1 and 2 managers, and reach an agreed decision on how HSE will respond.
- iii. Visits to non-livestock farms and other agriculture-related premises (e.g. horticulture) can resume as normal.
- iv. Visits to poultry farms may be resumed. Staff should additionally follow the guidance relating to Avian Influenza in SIM/01/2005/09.

12 Visits within FMD Low Risk Area:

- i. Visits to agriculture related premises can be resumed.

Bluetongue virus (BTV)

13 Within the Control and Protection Zones there are various DEFRA restrictions in place; mainly relating to movements and gatherings of ruminants – e.g. cattle, sheep, goats, etc. In some cases, the BTV and FMD restriction zones overlap.

14 Unlike FMD, BTV cannot be spread from animal to animal, or as a result of human contact with infected animals. BTV can only be spread by: i) infected midges biting an uninfected animal, or ii) when a previously uninfected midge bites an infected animal.

15 The risk of visiting staff spreading BTV is negligible. However, given the current sensitivities of livestock farmers and media coverage, the following guidance should be followed.

16 Visits within the BTV Control or Protection Zones (but outside FMD Protection and Surveillance Zones):

- i. No routine, proactive visits should take place to ruminant livestock (cattle, sheep,

goats or similar) farms.

- ii. If visits to livestock farms are deemed necessary (e.g. to investigate fatal or serious accidents), staff should discuss the matter with their Band 1 and 2 managers, and reach an agreed decision on how HSE will respond.
- iii. Visits to other livestock farms, pig farms or other non-livestock farms and other agriculture-related premises (e.g. horticulture) can be resumed.
- iv. Visits to poultry farms may be resumed. Again, visiting staff should additionally follow the guidance relating to Avian Influenza in SIM/01/2005/09.

Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

17 Farming SHADs should continue to be organised and held subject to the following;

- i. SHADs within FMD Risk Areas should be postponed until current restrictions are lifted by DEFRA.
- ii. SHADs outside of an FMD Risk Area should go ahead as planned.
- iii. SHADs outside BTV Control and Protection Zones should go ahead as planned.
- iv. SHADs within BTV Control and Protection Zones, which are to be held at neutral, non-livestock venues (e.g. agricultural colleges, showgrounds, etc.) should also go ahead as planned.

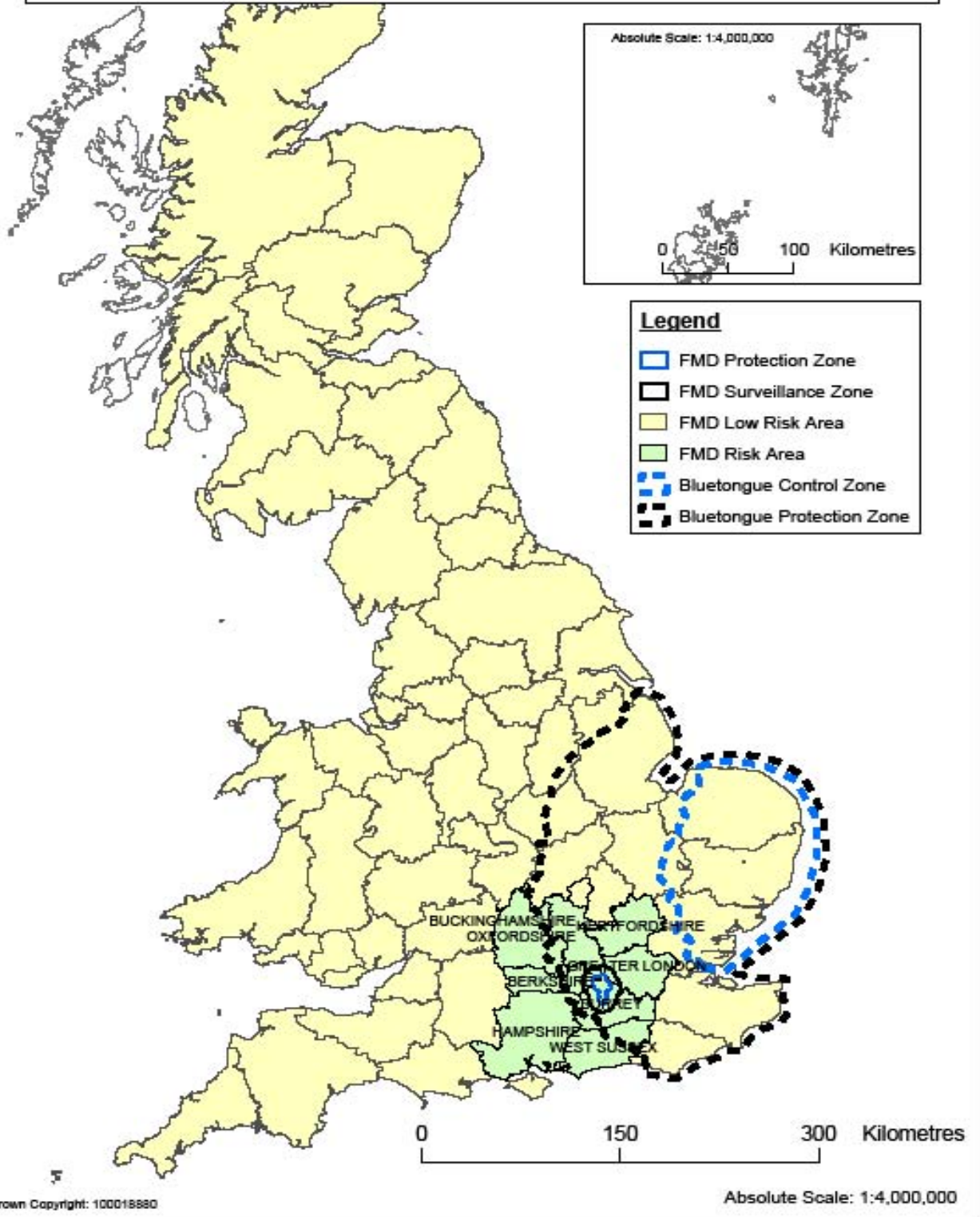
18 Para 17 gives advice on whether a SHAD should go ahead based on the location of the SHAD venue. Additionally, the location of the invitees needs to be considered. Until further notice, farmers who live within the FMD Risk Area should not be invited to SHADs.

19 Due to the recent FMD outbreaks, one SHAD was postponed by the host College as a precautionary measure, because of concerns that attendees and instructors (many of who are also farmers) may need to pass through or near controlled zones and could theoretically be linked to any spread of the disease. The instructors involved in delivering SHADs are fully aware of the appropriate precautions and can provide necessary biosecurity arrangements for their own purposes (i.e. in respect of their own farming or training activities). However, if Lantra Awards instructors or any other person or organisation express concerns about attending or holding SHADs then they, the SHAD hosts and/or local HSE staff should immediately contact Sector staff (Alan Plom) who will try to arrange alternative trainers centrally through our contract with Lantra Awards, so that the event can go ahead.

20 SIM/01/2007/06 contains details of the proposed programme of SHADs for 2007/08. Currently, there is only one event planned in the current FMD Risk Area, but this is not being held until February 2008.

Annex 1 - DEFRA map showing current FMD and BTV Restriction Zones

Map of Great Britain with Foot and Mouth Risk Areas and Bluetongue Control and Protection Zones. As of 00:01 2nd October 2007.



CREATOR: RADAR Team, Defra

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