

## Louping Ill

### Background Information

Louping ill is a viral infection of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). It causes infection in sheep and grouse in the UK. It very rarely causes disease in humans.

### Organism

Louping ill virus (LIV)

### Incidence and Transmission

Louping ill is a very rare disease in humans. Most cases have been linked to occupational exposure, in particular laboratory workers.

Louping ill virus affects many types of animals, but is most common in sheep and grouse. It is found in the UK in upland rough grazing and moorland areas. It is spread by the sheep tick. In addition it can be spread by contact with infected animal material, particularly if the process generates aerosols.

There is no spread from person to person.

### Occupations and processes where louping ill may present a risk

Occupational exposure to louping ill virus may occur in those who:

- work with material from infected animals;
- are in contact with animals in high risk areas of the UK; or
- work outdoors in high risk areas of the UK.

Occupations where there may be a risk of occupationally acquired louping ill include:

- farmers – particularly hill farmers;
- abattoir workers, meat processing plant workers and butchers;
- veterinary surgeons; and
- forestry workers and other outdoor workers in high risk areas.

### Clinical Information

The incubation period is up to one week.

The disease has two phases. In the first phase there are flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache and muscle ache. There is then a period of about a week in which there are no symptoms. The second phase is more severe, with symptoms of fever and neurological effects.

Anyone with severe symptoms who may have been exposed to LIV should seek medical attention immediately. Recovery may take several weeks, but the disease doesn't usually cause any long-term effects and is rarely fatal.

### **Control**

The following control measures reduce the risk of infection:

- Suitable protective clothing should be worn.
- Good occupational hygiene practices should be followed, especially washing with warm water and soap.
- Cuts and abrasions should be covered with waterproof plasters.
- A suitable disinfectant should be used.
- It is important to be 'tick aware' in high risk areas.
- In areas with long grass, wear long trousers, tucked in to socks.
- Check exposed skin for ticks (they are very small and therefore difficult to see) and remove immediately with tweezers.
- Check clothing and animals (eg working dogs) for ticks.
- Use insect repellents.

### **Further Information**

[Public Health England– Louping ill](#)