

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: November 06, 2024

Report Number: DA2024-0009

Report Name: Bluetongue Disease Reaches Three Nordic Countries

Country: Denmark

Post: The Hague

Report Category: Agriculture in the News, Agricultural Situation, Dairy and Products, Livestock and Products, Agriculture in the Economy

Prepared By: Marit van der Hoek

Approved By: Laura Geller

Report Highlights:

After the 2023 outbreak of bluetongue disease in Europe, the bluetongue virus (BTV-3) has now spread to three Nordic countries. Denmark encountered the first case of bluetongue disease on August 9, Norway on September 6, and Sweden on September 12. Bluetongue disease affects sheep, goats, and cattle. Sheep and goats face higher mortality rates than cows, but sick cows produce less milk than normal.

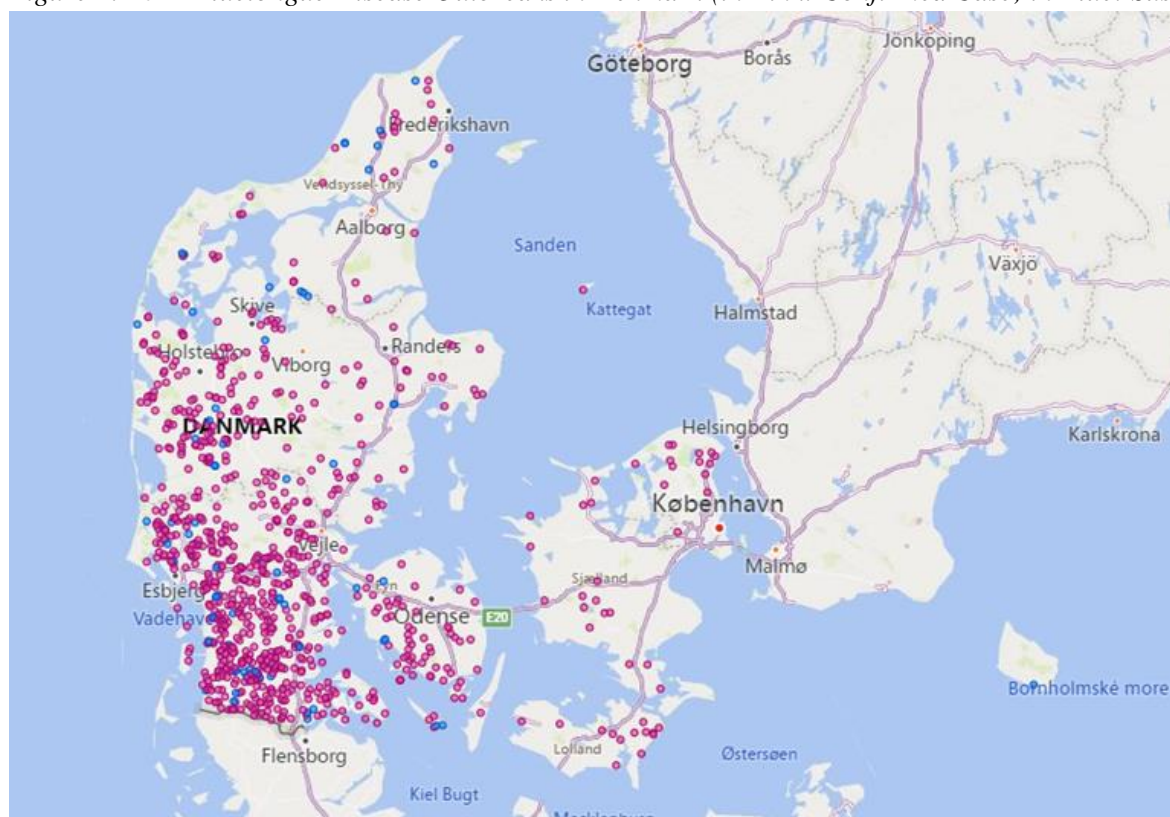
Denmark

On August 9, 2024, the first case of bluetongue disease (BTV-3) was discovered in Denmark in both sheep and cattle. The last outbreak in Denmark was in 2007.¹ Most of Denmark has been affected (see map, Figure 1). There have currently been 863 outbreaks registered up to November (see for a detailed Figure 2). Among them are also many organic operations (accounting for around 20 percent of the outbreaks).

Danish figures on mortality rates or impact on milk production are not yet available, but are expected to follow the pattern of the countries where BTV-3 first emerged, such as the Netherlands (see [NL2024-0012 Bluetongue Disease Outbreak Impacting Sheep and Dairy Sector Despite Vaccine](#)). There have been no restrictions on movement implemented in Denmark, although the detection of the disease still needs to be reported to the authorities.

Voluntary vaccination is possible in Denmark,² and organic herds may be vaccinated.³ Unlike in many other countries having been hit by bluetongue, Danish insurance companies have started covering animal losses due to bluetongue, but not milk production losses.⁴

Figure 1: 2024 Bluetongue Disease Outbreaks in Denmark (in Pink: Confirmed Case; in Blue: Suspicion)



Source: <https://en.foedevarestyrelsen.dk/animals/animal-health-/animal-diseases/bluetongue>

¹ <https://xn--kvgrdgjvningdanmark-3wbs.dk/nyheder/orientering-fra-lf-kvaeg-vedr-bluetongue-i-danmark/>

² <https://foedevarestyrelsen.dk/dyr/dyresundhed/dyresygdomme/bluetongue/bluetongue-nyheder-og-viden>

³ <https://lbst.dk/alle-nyheder/faglige-meddelelser/2024/avg/vejledning-i-forhold-til-bluetongue-i-oekologiske-besaetninger>

⁴ <https://landbrugsavisen.dk/kvaeg/forsikringer-bluetongue-opstod-pa-rekordtid-men-tab-af-maelk-og-dode-far-daekkes-ikke>

In 2023, there were 1,643 farms with sheep registered in Denmark, housing 152,572 sheep. Almost a quarter of these are larger farms with over 50 sheep (see graph below). Very large herds are used for meat production (primarily lamb), although this is not a very large sector in Denmark. Denmark was the 15th largest sheep meat producer in the European Union, with an annual production of 1,210 tons of sheep meat. In terms of cattle, there were 8,972 farms with cattle (with 1.4 million head of cattle) and 2,228 dairy farms (with 547,431 dairy cows) in 2023, according to Statistics Denmark. That makes Denmark rank 9th in the European Union, in terms of number of dairy cows, and 8th in terms of raw cow milk deliveries (5.69 million tons).

Figure 2: Detailed Overview of 2024 Bluetongue Outbreaks in Denmark

Sector	No. herds
Dairy Herd	195
Beef Cattle Herd	144
Sheep Herd (Meat)	138
Dairy Herd (Organic)	126
Sheep Farming (Hobby)	115
Cattle Keeping (Hobby)	38
Heifer Hotel	34
Heifer Hotel (Organic)	27
Beef Cattle Herd (Organic)	19
Sheep Herd (Meat) (Organic)	8
Calf Herd (Slaughter)	8
Goat Keeping (Hobby)	6
Zoo with cattle	2
Goat Herd (Meat)	1
Not specified	1
Zoo with sheep	1
Grand Total	863

Source: FAS/The Hague analysis, via [Bluetongue - Danish Veterinary and Food Administration \(foedevarestyrelsen.dk\)](https://www.foedevarestyrelsen.dk)

Norway

On September 6, the first case of bluetongue disease (BTV-3) was discovered in Norway, likely spread by midges carried by the wind from Denmark.⁵ The last outbreak was in 2009. Since then, the country has had a monitoring program in place, measuring bluetongue virus antibodies in milk tanks every September and November.⁶ There have been 97 confirmed outbreaks (20 in cattle, and 77 in sheep),⁷ in the Southeast of Norway.⁸

The reported mortality rate in sheep is 30 percent.⁹ The exact prevalence of the bluetongue virus in Norwegian cattle is not precisely known. In September 2024, 675 milk tanks were analyzed, with 54 milk tanks testing positive for BTV-3, most already inside the bluetongue area.¹⁰ The government has announced zones in which the movement of breeding animals (and products) is limited, requiring prior blood testing.¹¹ (See Figure 3 below). Nortura, Norway's largest agricultural cooperative, announced self-regulation with more stringent restrictions.¹²

Vaccination in general has not been permitted in Norway, as the vaccine not authorized in Norway, citing that vaccination would hinder effective monitoring of the disease prevalence within milk.¹³ However, in severely affected areas, an exception has been made¹⁴ so that veterinarians with permission can vaccinate under their own responsibility. The government will assess the rules for vaccination again for the year 2025.¹⁵ It is expected that in wintertime the outbreak will subside, due to midges being unable to proliferate below certain temperatures.¹⁶

As of March 1, 2024, Norway had 202,771 dairy cows, 106,337 beef cows, 889,615 sheep, and 33,938 goats.¹⁷ The country is the largest sheep meat producer of the Nordics - with a 2023 production of 22,370 tons.¹⁸ The country also produces wool,¹⁹ with its Norwegian White Sheep producing the finest quality – 2023 saw a production of 898 tons.²⁰ Within Europe, Norway is the 7th largest producer of sheep meat²¹. Norway's milk deliveries for 2023 were 1.39 billion liters of milk, and 32 million liters of organic milk.

⁵ <https://www.vetinst.no/nyheter/her-undersoker-de-svknott-for-a-se-om-den-kan-overfore-blatungevirus>

⁶ <https://www.vetinst.no/sykdom-og-agens/blatunge>

⁷ <https://www.vetinst.no/dyr/sau/status-blatunge-i-norge>

⁸ <https://www.nettavisen.no/ostfold/blatungevirus/mattilsynet/na-er-blatungevirus-pavist-i-ostfold-det-er-forste-gang-blatunge-er-pavist-utenfor-agder-og-rogaland/s/5-95-2044553>

⁹ <https://www.nrk.no/rogaland/farlig-blatungevirus-dropper-saueprogram-pa-bjerkreimsmarken-1.17057619>

¹⁰ <https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr/dyresykdommer/blatunge/til-deg-som-har-drovtvggere>

¹¹ <https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr/dyresykdommer/blatunge/tiltak-mot-blatunge>

¹² <https://medlem.nortura.no/organisasjon/nyheter/tiltak-for-a-begrense-spredning-av-blatungevirus-og-hindre-overvintring-av-virus-til-neste-var>

¹³ <https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr/dyresykdommer/blatunge/vaksinering-mot-blatunge>

¹⁴ <https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr/dyresykdommer/blatunge/vaksinering-mot-blatunge>

¹⁵ <https://www.vetinst.no/sykdom-og-agens/blatunge/vaksinering-mot-blatunge-i-norge-sporsmal-og-svar>

¹⁶ Id., see also <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.4698>.

¹⁷ <https://www.ssb.no/en/jord-skog-jakt-og-fiskeri/jordbruk/statistikk/husdyrhald>

¹⁸ <https://www.ssb.no/en/jord-skog-jakt-og-fiskeri/jordbruk/statistikk/kjotproduksjon>

¹⁹ <https://www.animalia.no/no/Dyr/ull-og-ullklassifisering/>

²⁰ <https://www.nrk.no/vestland/mangel-pa-populaer-norsk-ull--det-hastar-a-snu-utviklinga-1.17064062>

²¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tag00045/default/table?lang=en>

Figure 3: 2024 Outbreaks of Bluetongue in Norway (in Red) (Including Negative Test Results (in Blue))

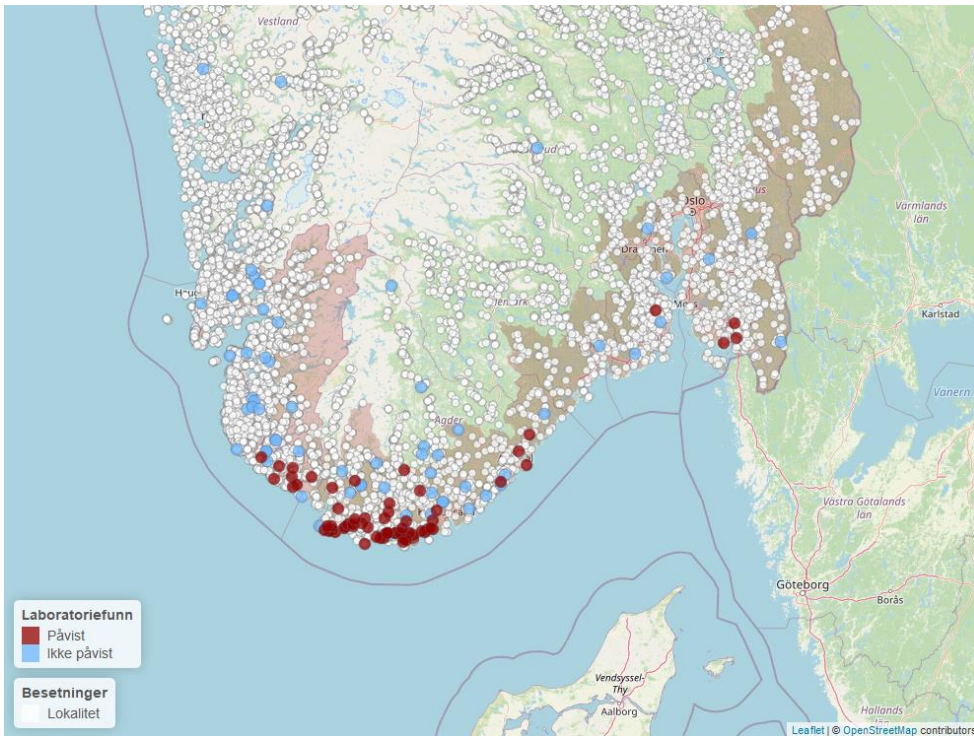
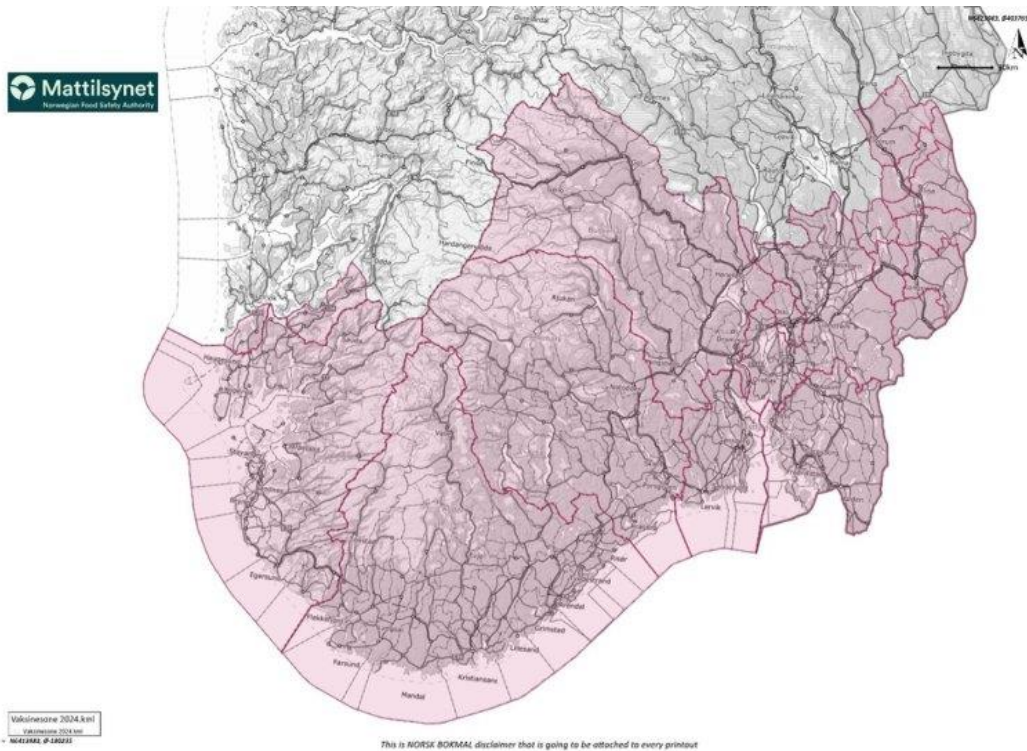


Figure 4. Norwegian Action & Vaccination Zones, With Presumed Higher Risk of Bluetongue Infection



Source:

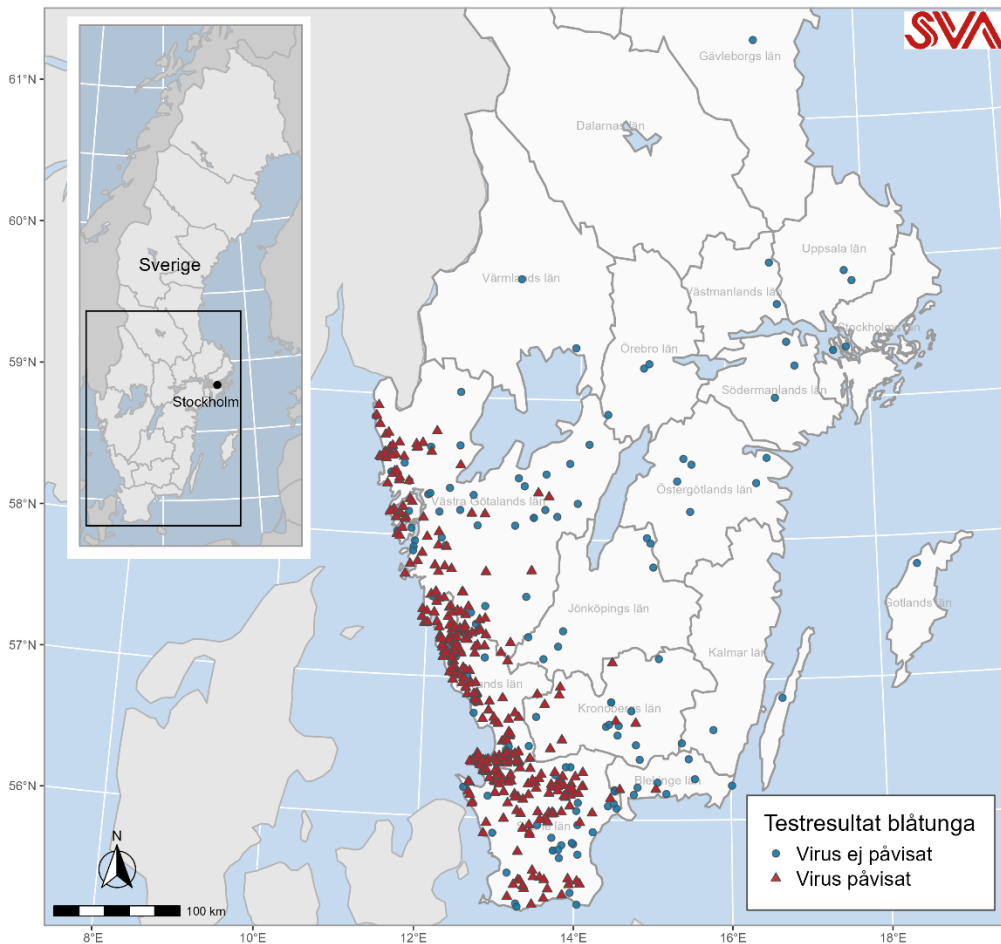
<https://www.mattilsynet.no/dyr/dyresykdommer/blatunge/tiltak-mot-blatunge>

Sweden

The first outbreak of bluetongue disease (BTV-3) in Sweden occurred a few days after the first Norwegian outbreak, on September 12, 2024. The outbreak took place on the west side of the country, which is close in proximity to Denmark and southeast Norway.²² The last bluetongue disease outbreak in Sweden occurred between 2008-2010.²³

To date, there have been 353 herds with a confirmed outbreak, of which 167 are sheep herds and 188 are cattle herds.²⁴ Sweden has not announced any restrictions on movements, and vaccinations are permitted and may be administered by a veterinarian or the animal owners themselves.²⁵

Figure 5: Outbreaks of Bluetongue in Sweden (in Red) (Including Negative Test Results (in Blue))



Source: <https://www.sva.se/amnesomraden/smittlege/smittlege-for-blatunga/>

²² <https://www.lrf.se/nyheter/sjukdomen-blatunga-bekraftad-i-sverige/>

²³ <https://www.lansstyrelsen.se/gavleborg/om-oss/nyheter-och-press/nyheter/nyheter---gavleborg/2024-09-13-blatunga-har-konstaterats-i-sverige.html>

²⁴ <https://www.sva.se/amnesomraden/smittlege/smittlege-for-blatunga/>

²⁵ <https://www.sva.se/amnesomraden/djursjukdomar-a-o/blatunga/>

In June 2024, Sweden had an estimated 455,000 sheep on 7,800 farms.²⁶ Sweden is the 11th largest producer of sheep meat in the European Union, producing 4,740 tons of sheep meat in 2023. Additionally, in 2024, the country had 1.4 million head of cattle, of which 289,433 cows are used for milk production.²⁷ Sweden ranks 13th in the European Union in the number of dairy cows, and also 13th in terms of raw cow milk deliveries (2.82 million tons).

Attachments:

No Attachments.

²⁶ <https://jordbruksverket.se/om-jordbruksverket/jordbruksverkets-officiella-statistik/jordbruksverkets-statistikrapporter/statistik/2024-10-15-lantbrukets-djur-i-juni-2024>

²⁷ Id.