

## Bluetongue



Female biting midge, *Culicoides sonorensis*  
Photo: Scott Bauer, [ARS Image Gallery](#)

**CAUSE:** Bluetongue is caused by a virus spread by biting midges.

**EFFECTS:** The disease most seriously affects sheep, which may die. Cattle generally do not show visible symptoms, but they carry the disease for months after infection.

**How is Bluetongue spread?** The disease is not contagious, but is spread by *Culicoides* midges, also known as biting gnats or no-see-ums. Biting midges in the northeast US do not spread the virus.

**How can Bluetongue be prevented?** Cattle are the main mammalian reservoir of Bluetongue. Serologic testing can detect infection.

**Can Bluetongue affect people?** Humans are not affected by this disease. Sheep are primarily affected, however, goats, deer, and cattle (rarely) can be infected.

**What if there is an outbreak?** Bluetongue is unlikely to become a problem in New England. However, ruminant animals imported into the state must be tested.

**For more information on Bluetongue, see:**

[The Merck Veterinary Manual: Bluetongue](#)

[USDA APHIS: Bluetongue Disease Information](#)

[Queensland Government: Bluetongue](#)