

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](#)