



[**ZOOM NOTE:** To clearly see this text, please use the '+' keys on the top of this screen to enlarge it to 100% or greater]

All **blocked out** areas are text/names/descriptions that may contravene Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) regulation; text within [] has been inserted by this office.

The arrival of bluetongue disease in Britain could also mean the arrival of a deadly horse disease, as Celia Gadd explains

Carried by insects

With the recent outbreaks of bluetongue disease, horse owners need to be aware of the possible danger of midges spreading other diseases amongst their animals.

Bluetongue is in the same virus family as African horse sickness (AHS) and is transmitted by the same species of biting midge. (AHS and bluetongue share the same mosquito family of *Culicoides* which is the same genus that also causes sweet itch).

AHS is a more dramatic disease than bluetongue and infected horses are usually made severely ill with a very high mortality rate.

At a recent Thoroughbred Racing and Breeding Seminar at Cheltenham Peter Webbon, who is the Chief Executive of the Animal Health Trust, said:

"Nothing is more likely to disrupt racing and breeding in the UK in the next few years than infectious diseases. We have seen how flu has ravaged the horse industry in Australia."

Brigadier Paul Jepson, Veterinary Director of the Horse Trust, a major provider of funding for scientific research

and education, also spoke at the seminar of the need to raise awareness of the disease. "The species of *Culicoides* biting midge that can carry AHS used to be found only south of the Mediterranean. The recent outbreak of bluetongue in cattle and sheep in the UK and Europe shows that the midge vectors are present. Bluetongue and AHS are like non-identical twins," explained Jepson. "What suits the bluetongue virus also suits AHS."

The midges feed on the horse and if the horse is infected with the AHS virus, the midge becomes infected as well. The virus needs a temperature consistently above 14 degrees centigrade to mature and pass to the salivary gland and once there it will infect the next horse the midge feeds on.

Affected animals typically show signs of fever, with swelling of the face, neck and brisket. This usually progresses to great difficulty in breathing and frequently death within a week.

The Horse Trust is working closely with the government and the horse industry to develop strategies for monitoring, prevention and control of the disease, but it

is also up to the individual horse owner to do what they can to prevent this awful disease becoming resident in the UK.

It is important for us to act early to protect our animals from these insects.

There are many fly products available on the market and one that is particularly [redacted] in discouraging midges from landing and biting is the Stop-It-All oil and shampoo which has been developed by Karen Ruggles from Somerset.

Developed and blended from a variety of vegetable oils, this product has been remarkably effective in a wide range of [redacted] including s[redacted] and mud [redacted] and when used as a fly repellent it is very cost effective as the oil is diluted with the shampoo and turned into a spray. It is 100 per cent natural and organic and has been 98 per cent effective in all trials relating to biting insects and midges.

Find out more

For further information on this product, and other ways of helping protect your horses from biting insects please visit www.stop-it-all.co.uk or ring the Helpdesk on 01823 259952.

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