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Bluetongue disease – Origin, prevalence and future trends in Europe

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Bluetongue disease is an infectious, but non-contagious viral infection of ruminants that is transmitted by *Culicoides* spp.. It can cause massive losses in farmed ruminants, particularly in sheep. Bluetongue disease was never reported in Europe north of the Alps before August 2006, when outbreaks were almost simultaneously discovered in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. The disease has now spread over a large area of Western and Central Europe. Vaccination programmes were started to control the spread of disease, its clinical impact on the affected animals and to curb the economic consequences of the epidemic.