



Bluetongue Virus and your Pets



Mosquito in my kitchen

As colder weather looms and the fate of the biting midges seems doomed, consequently the spread of the "Bluetongue" virus should come to a fairly abrupt halt.....for the moment.

In order to answer a large number of enquiries from concerned clients this new disease to the UK is neither a threat to humans or our domestic pets. This is a disease of ruminants (principally sheep and cattle) which is spread from one animal to another via a blood feeding flying insect known as the midge.

This notorious beastie is well known in my homeland in the West of Scotland where it is infamous for ruining many outdoor pursuits as the voracious little feeders cause tremendous local skin irritation. Fortunately, for the time being there are no major viral diseases that occur that far North although with the projected climate changes that are predicted that situation may well change.

It has been assumed that the warm weather of 2006 allowed the specific midge that harbours this virus to survive in sufficient numbers over winter to spread North in Europe and ultimately across the channel to the UK.

Whilst Bluetongue is no threat to our pets the same principle of disease spread by blood sucking parasites is likely to be of great importance to our pet population if this trend continues.

Leishmaniasis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, hepatozoonosis and heartworm are all potentially life threatening conditions that are transmitted via ticks, sandflies and mosquitoes and all are currently available in Europe!!

At Fairfield we have already seen some of these diseases in pets who have previously been abroad and the importance of rigorous and regular parasite control cannot be underestimated. Who knows whether this picture of a mosquito taken in my kitchen last week may represent a more sinister shape of things to come?

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This article is available on the Fairfield Veterinary Centre web site at www.fairfield-vets.co.uk