Shamonda Virus (SHAV)

An Emerging Midge-Borne Orthobunyavirus — Fever, Scour and Milk Drop, with Possible Effects on Pregnancy

Shamonda virus is an orthobunyavirus of the Simbu serogroup, the same group as Schmallenberg virus, and is spread by biting midges (*Culicoides*). First isolated from cattle in Nigeria in 1965, it was reported only sporadically in Africa and Asia until a Shamonda-like virus emerged in western Europe during the summer of 2026, with cases confirmed in France, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Jersey and the Republic of Ireland. Adult cattle typically show fever, scour and a fall in milk yield. As with Schmallenberg, infection during pregnancy may cause abortion, stillbirth or congenital deformities, although the level of risk is not yet known.

Key Clinical Signs

- Fever, dullness and reduced appetite
- Scour
- Mild respiratory signs in some animals
- Signs in individual animals are short-lived; herd outbreaks last around two to three weeks
- Abortion and stillbirth; virus has been found in aborted calves

DAIRY HERDS

- Marked drop in milk yield, in some affected herds to only a few litres per cow per day

Transmission / Risk Factors

- Midge (*Culicoides*) activity, mainly July to November
- Cattle with no previous exposure to Simbu group viruses
- Pregnant animals, particularly in early to mid-pregnancy
- Introduction of infected animals, and windborne spread of midges from affected regions
- Low-lying, wet and sheltered ground where midge numbers are high
- Little spread from animal to animal, other than from dam to calf in the womb

Diagnosis

Blood samples from affected animals for PCR testing, which detects the virus during the short period it circulates in the blood.

Specific testing is needed: cases in Europe tested negative for Schmallenberg, bluetongue and epizootic haemorrhagic disease.

Submit aborted, stillborn or deformed calves for post-mortem examination and virus testing.

Rule out other causes of fever, scour and milk drop, including bluetongue, Schmallenberg and BVD.

NOTE

Shamonda virus is not notifiable and is not subject to official disease controls, so there are no movement or trade restrictions. There is no known risk to human health. Report unusual illness to your own veterinary surgeon so that cases can be investigated.

Prevention and Control

- There is no vaccine; protecting cattle from midge bites is the only preventive measure available
- Use licensed insect repellents and consider housing during peak midge activity; neither will prevent all bites
- Reduce midge breeding sites by managing standing water, wet ground and muck around buildings
- Know the health status of herds you buy from, and isolate and observe bought-in cattle
- Where practicable, plan breeding so that early pregnancy falls outside peak midge activity
- Keep accurate service and calving records so any effect on pregnancy is recognised early

Treatment

There is no specific treatment. Most affected cattle recover over one to three weeks with good nursing; your veterinary surgeon may advise anti-inflammatories, fluids and supportive care, with antibiotics only where a secondary infection is present. Milk yield may take some weeks to recover. Monitor pregnant animals in affected herds, and have any abortions, stillbirths or deformed calves investigated.