

Updated Outbreak Assessment #27

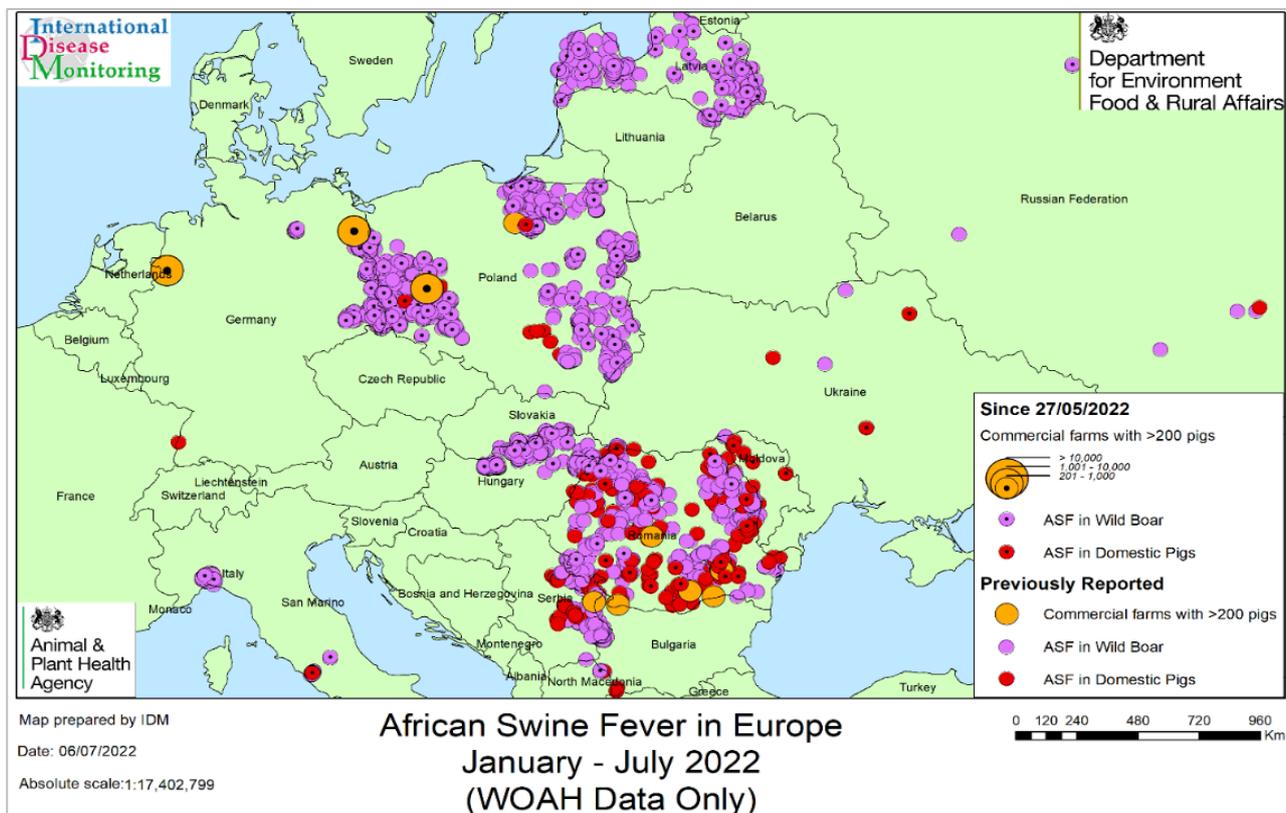
African swine fever in Europe

05 July 2022

Ref: VITT/1200 ASF in Europe

Disease report

Since our last report on 26 May 2022, a case of African swine fever (ASF) has been confirmed in domestic pigs in a new region of Germany, in Emsland, Lower Saxony, roughly 15km from the Netherlands border. (Map 1). This is approximately 300km from the nearest reports in wild boar in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and 500km from the recently reported outbreak in domestic pigs in the south of the country, close to the French border. The farm contained 286 sows, 400 suckling piglets and 1100 fattening piglets. Clinical signs (fever and inappetence) were detected in sows on 01 July 2022 and disease control measures (including 3km and 10km zones) immediately put in place. The farm is located in an area with a high density of pig farms. A further outbreak in the eastern state of Brandenburg, where the disease has been previously reported, was also detected on a holding of 1,300 fattening pigs.



This report in northwest Germany represents another significant jump for ASF and serves as an important reminder of the ability of ASF to spread long distances to a previously unaffected region, often via human-mediated routes, as was observed in Belgium in 2018 and more recently in north-western and central regions of Italy, in southwest Germany near the French border and further afield (please see our ASF in Asia and the Americas reports).

No pigs have been moved from the affected establishments to other Member States or third countries and new restrictions under Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/605 will prevent any further imports from infected regions. The same regulation covers the prohibitions, derogations, and requirement for certification from any region affected by ASF, for consigning live pigs, or products of porcine origin, or associated animal by-products, to EU Member States and third countries.

Elsewhere in Germany there have been a further 40 reports of ASF in wild boar, comprising of 153 individual cases, concentrated in the north-east of the country, near the border with Poland. Elsewhere, and according to OIE reports, frequent outbreaks in domestic pigs continue to be reported in Romania. ASF also continues to be reported in wild boar across Europe with sporadic outbreaks in domestic pigs.

Outbreak data

Details of all outbreaks and cases provided in the tables and map in this report were taken from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formally OIE), unless stated otherwise. Additional information has been provided, where available, from the EU Animal Disease Information System (ADIS) summary tables (ADIS, 2022), and information from relevant PAFF presentations.

Situation assessment

Germany

In Lower Saxony, 296 farms with 195,000 pigs identified in the restriction zone surrounding the affected farm. Measures implemented in the restriction zone include random inspections of all farms and a ban on moving pigs. The movement of pig products and manure into the zone is also prohibited, though the grain harvest that is due to start is still allowed as it is not an outbreak in wild boar (ProMed, 2022). The Netherlands has introduced additional biosecurity measures such as secondary cleaning and disinfection of vehicles transporting pigs from Germany (Feed Strategy, 2022). A protocol for reporting and testing wild boar in the Netherlands has been in place for some time.

The outbreak in Uckermark (Brandenburg) is outside the restriction zones demarcated in Annex I to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/605. The Commission is working to review the EU zoning measures for ASF.

No further outbreaks have been confirmed in the state of Baden Württemberg since the initial report on 26 May. Response measures identified two pig establishments in the Protection Zone (3km) all of which were sampled, and 28 establishments with pigs in the Surveillance Zone (10km) 25 of which were samples and one contact holding which was sampled. No ASF was detected. As part of their ongoing response, the general ban on hunting and access to land remains in place in the Restriction Zone (RZ) II along with carcass searches using drones, dog teams, and human-chain methods conducted regularly. These methods have found no wild boar carcasses as of 03 June 2022, but active monitoring and shooting of wild boar has led to seven being tested, all of which were negative (PAFF, 2022a).

Preliminary genetic sequencing has been carried out on the samples from the outbreak in Baden Württemberg, and showed it is a strain which has not been identified in Germany before (i.e., in Saxony, Brandenburg or Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) (PAFF, 2022a).

Italy

Since our last report on 26 May, Italy has reported an outbreak of ASF in domestic pigs. This was on a small commercial pig farm in Lazio within the Infected Zone, and the source of infection is thought to be contact with wild boar. Italy has also reported 27 more wild boar cases in the Infected Zone in Lazio, Rome. An 'Infected Zone' and an 'Attention Zone' were implemented by Order of the President of the Lazio Region on 7 May, and this was enlarged at the end of May following the discovery of two ASF-positive wild boar carcasses outside the zone, one of which was in an advanced state of decay. There has also been infection detected in a wild boar in Rieti that tested positive for ASF after being killed in a road traffic accident, resulting in another Infected Zone around 60km east of the Infected Zone in Lazio.

There have been 37 more cases in wild boar in the north-west near Genoa since our last report, all of which have been within the Infected Zone.

In Rome, the source of infection is most likely to be human mediated, with garbage management, passages between parks and the city, and feeding by people, all implicated (PAFF, 2022c).

France

France have not yet detected ASF, though they remain on high alert given the developments in Germany and have ramped up their surveillance efforts in response to the confirmation in Baden Württemberg. This has involved extending the criteria for wild boar carcass searchers from hunters to include walkers, cyclists and fishermen, an immediate census of pig holdings within a 20km radius of the German outbreak with a visit to check for clinical signs and provide a biosecurity assessment, alongside raising awareness of stakeholders across multiple sectors including farmers, seasonal workers, travellers and truck drivers (PAFF, 2022b)

Conclusion

These latest two cases in Germany represent new “jumps” in disease distribution which is the fifth such event in Europe in the last two months. This is concerning as it would appear that none of these cases have arisen as a result of the movement of infected pigs or wild boar. Instead, the other likely pathways are human mediated transport of infected products or contaminated equipment / products (fomites). This is confirmed by the genotyping of the virus from the new outbreaks and the epidemiological investigations.

Therefore, while we consider the overall risk of entry of ASF virus into the UK from all combined pathways remains at **medium, because of the regular detection of outbreaks and wild boar cases in new areas as a result of human-mediated routes, this particular pathway is now considered to be HIGH**. There is considerable uncertainty as the movement of people into the UK at present is affected by travel disruption, fuel prices and reducing seasonal worker numbers.

Nevertheless, all travellers are strongly advised to avoid bringing, buying, ordering on the internet, or requesting any pork products – for example, fresh or frozen meat, dried or cured meats, sausages, salamis, or pâté – back to the UK from affected parts of Europe. Travellers from Asia and other third country areas who bring meat or dairy products can also face prosecution and a large fine.

Swill feeding any animal, whether pigs, poultry, ruminants or wildlife is illegal and has the potential to cause substantial harm. We would like to emphasise to all pig keepers, pig producers, smallholders, and the general public to ensure pigs are not fed catering waste, kitchen scraps or pork products, thereby observing the swill feeding ban.

All pig keepers, whether commercial holdings or not, should remain vigilant and ensure that any visitors or seasonal workers have not had any recent contact with pigs, pig products, pig premises, wild boar (including hunting) or equipment associated with such activities in the affected regions in Europe or other affected parts of the world. As with all biosecurity, these measures are only as effective as the people using them, so proper training should be provided.

Pig keepers and veterinarians should remind themselves of the clinical signs for ASF. Any suspect cases must be reported promptly. Please see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/african-swine-fever> for more information.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

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