Bluetongue (BTV-4) in Greece and the European situation

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

**Note:** Defra’s International Disease Monitoring (IDM) team monitors outbreaks of high impact diseases around the world. Bluetongue virus (BTV) is among those diseases of major concern.

1 Disease Report

Greece has reported 23 outbreaks of BTV-4 in sheep and goats in the Peloponnese. Twenty one outbreaks were reported in Lakonia region and 2 in Arkadia region, all in sheep (OIE, 2014; European Commission, 2014a). Disease control measures have been put in place, but vaccination is prohibited in Greece. Source of disease is not known.

2 Situation Assessment

The Greek Authorities have previously reported BTV on the islands of Lesbos (BTV 1,8 &16) and the Dodecanese Islands and Samos (BTV-4 &16). The last outbreak of BTV-4 from Greece was on the Dodecanese Islands in December 2012, but there have been no reports this year, until these. BTV-4 control zones are also present in Corsica, Italy, Spain and Portugal (see map or European Commission 2014b).
Under the Bluetongue Regulation EC/1266/2007 movements of animals from like to like disease status restriction zones are allowed at any time of the year. However, movement out of the restriction zones to other dissimilar zones is only allowed under certain derogations, the requirements of which include pre-movement testing, vaccination with an approved vaccine, or vector proofing. The Greek authorities have confirmed they are not moving animals under derogations.

According to TRACES, (the EU trade electronic notification system) there have been no recent consignments of bluetongue susceptible species to the UK from any region of Greece. Consignments from other Member States where BTV is present are covered by the derogations for testing or vaccination.

3 Conclusions
Although the risk of introduction into the UK has not significantly increased as a result of this outbreak, it highlights that although Northern Europe is free of bluetongue at present and BTV-4 has never been reported in North West Europe, the disease in general is still present in the EU and could present a risk in the future.

The vector season will have started again across Europe, so more cases should be expected in affected countries and the mild winter over much of Europe may have resulted in some spread to new regions.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

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5 References

