Updated Outbreak Assessment

Update #9 on African Swine Fever in East Europe

19th June 2017

Disease report

Since our last update on 10th April, there have been several new reports of African Swine Fever (ASF) in domestic pigs in affected countries in eastern Europe, including the EU.

Estonia has reported an outbreak on a commercial unit (3,415 pigs) in Pärnu county in south west Estonia. This is the first time disease has been reported in domestic pigs in this part of Estonia. The disease was detected early with only 10 pigs being affected, four of which died. Disease control measures are in place, including culling all the pigs on site and a new Part III prevention zone will be put in place.

Lithuania has reported two outbreaks of ASF within the Part III control zone both in small backyard farms (2 and 3 pigs respectively). The first of which was in Panevežys county in
the north of the county. There are no commercial holdings within either the protection or surveillance zones. The second outbreak was in Alytus region, in the south west of the country near the border with Belarus. Again there were no commercial farms within the control zones. In both events, the pigs were culled, and disease control measures were put in place, but there was no change to the control zones.

Poland has reported 9 outbreaks all in backyard farms in Bialski, Moniecki, Siemiatycki and Losicki regions near the border with Belarus. In all cases, disease control measures were put in place. There have been some limited changes to the control zones as a result.

Ukraine and Russia have reported multiple outbreaks in domestic pigs – backyard farms – in several regions.

**Situation Assessment**

Outbreaks of ASF have followed a seasonal pattern in recent years with a number of outbreaks on backyard farms in Eastern Europe becoming a feature of the summer months. A substantial amount of work has been undertaken in recent years to improve biosecurity and on the whole the rate of increase in reporting outbreaks is reducing year on year as a result of these measures.

The Baltic States have limited trade links with the UK, for movement of pork products only. There are no movements of livestock or wild boar from these areas. There is a high level of trade in pork products between Poland and the UK, however, the outbreaks remain within a confined area close to the Belarussian border and outside the commercial pig herd.

A recent German study (Probst et al, 2017) has demonstrated that wild boar continue to show a lot of inquisitive behaviour towards dead wild boar which would be a likely transmission pathway. They are not necessarily cannibalising the carcases, but may have very close contact with the contaminated area around the carcase. The long persistence of virus in the environment means each carcase can be a source of infection for other animals for many months and therefore it is very important to detect and remove them as soon as possible.

**Conclusion**

Despite these outbreaks, the risk of ASF introduction to the UK remains very low (that is, “rare but could occur”), as the disease itself is still relatively contained in the restriction zones, and there are EU rules in place to cover the safe trade in meat and other products of animal origin.
We would like to remind all pig keepers to be vigilant, maintain biosecurity including the swill feeding ban and report any clinical signs of suspect disease promptly to a veterinarian.

We will continue to report on the situation as regular updates or if significant changes in the epidemiology of the disease occur.

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References

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