Updated Situation Assessment No.6

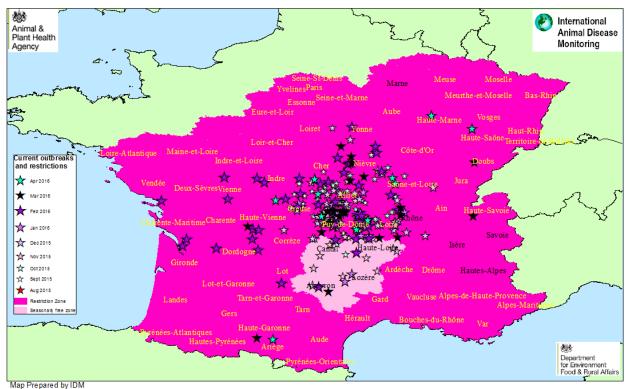
Bluetongue virus (BTV-8) in France

29th April 2016

Ref: VITT/1200 BTV-8 in France

Disease Report

France has now reported a total of 266 outbreaks of BTV-8, which is 26 new outbreaks since our last update in April 15th 2016 (OIE, 2016; see map). The restriction zones have not changed in coverage, but more of the seasonally free zones have been revoked. Nevertheless the current cold weather system over North West Europe means vector activity generally remains low (Ministère de L'Agriculture (FR), 2016). All the recent outbreaks except one are in cattle holdings, detected by surveillance activities; however one new report, in Ariege region (South West France) was from a goat, which was also tested as part of the epidemiological analyses carried out. This continues to support the evidence that BTV-8 presents with few clinical signs in cattle.



Absolute Scale 1:5,500,000 BTV-8 in France, current Restriction Zones* by date of map Date prepared 29/04/2016

0 30 60 120 180 240

* restriciton zones are available on theFrench Min of Ag website http://agriculture.gouv.fr/liste-des-departements-et-des-communes-classes-en-zone-reglementee-fco

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Animal and Plant Health Agency Veterinary & Science Policy Advice Team - International Disease Monitoring

Situation Assessment

ANSES has published a report of the epidemiology of BTV-8 in France between September and December 2015 (Bournez, et al. 2016). In it, the authors provide results of widespread surveillance carried out over the course of several weeks, testing cattle in every region through a national survey, as well as testing animals which were applying to move out of the restriction zone, and by increasing passive surveillance. These findings demonstrated that the epizootic is characterised by a low level of virus circulation and very few clinical signs in infected animals.

Under the national surveillance programme, nearly 40,000 cattle on over 1,300 farms in 89 departments were tested in September and October 2015, designed to detect with 95% confidence, within-herd prevalence of <10% and regional prevalence threshold (betweenherd) of 5%. The geographical focus of infection remains in the centre of France, mostly in Allier and Puy de Dome regions, with peripheral infection detected in Cantal, Cher, Creuse, Indre, Loire, Nievre, Saone and Loire regions. Testing animals which were applying to leave the restriction zone detected more outbreaks and an increase in restriction zones, particularly to the South and South East, where virus circulation is lower than the level of detection of the national survey.

The survey concludes that the centre of the epizootic was in Puy de Dome and if not the exact farm which was first reported, at least within the 2km zone of this farm. In addition, there was a between-herd prevalence of 50% in Puy de Dome and within herd prevalence of between 3% and 10% (the closer to the epicentre of the outbreaks, the higher the prevalence). Distance and within-herd or between-herd prevalence are inversely proportional. The prevalence level is below the level detected during the 2007-2008 winter surveillance programmes observed in Northern France and Belgium, which means 2015 represents the first year of the outbreak and cases are likely to rise in 2016. Additional studies will look at the immune status of cattle, but initial serological surveys between 2013 and 2015 showed a significant number of animals (>70%) born before 2010 (when vaccination campaigns stopped) were still seropositive, although this may not mean they are immunologically protected from infection anymore.

The report therefore concludes that there has been a very low level of viral circulation of in animals since 2012 when France was declared free; that circulation was not detected because of the absence of clinical signs in animals, where cattle and sheep were immunized (by natural infection or by vaccination), and; inability of the monitoring system to detect very low levels of virus circulation. The increasing proportion of naive animals through turnover rates and a favorable climate for Culicoides populations, probably allowed re-emergence in 2015.

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Conclusion

Our risk level remains the same. We will continue to monitor the current situation in France and report any further updates from the French Authorities, particularly about the winter surveillance which is still to be analysed. In addition, as the season progresses we will start to use meteorological information to inform our risk assessment.

Authors

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