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

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

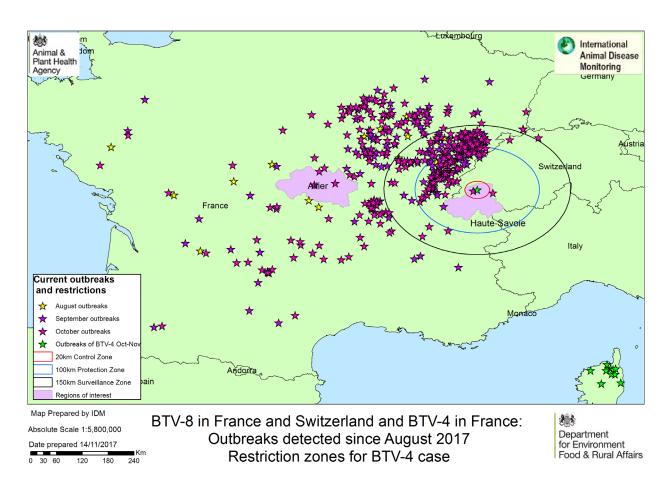
Bluetongue virus (BTV-4) in France

14th November 2017

Ref: VITT/1200 BTV-4 in France

Disease Report

On the 6th November, France reported a single case of BTV-4 in a bovine in Haute Savoie region (OIE, 2017). The animal in question tested positive for virus under the framework of pre-movement testing and has been humanely destroyed. Disease control measures are in place around the holding of origin, including surveillance and mandatory vaccination in the surrounding 20 km control and 100km prevention zones and surveillance in the additional 50km surveillance zone. The location of the holding of origin is close to the Italian and Swiss borders, and the respective authorities in each country have been notified as the zones also cover part of their territory.



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Situation Assessment

According to the French Authorities (Calavas *et al.*, 2017), the animal in question was a 15 day old veal calf which had been born in the Haute Savoie and then moved to a fattening farm in Allier region (via an assembly centre in the Loire region), where testing was carried out, prior to being moved to Spain. The animals at the fattening farm are also being tested.

The origin of disease is not known. BTV-4 has been circulating at high levels on the islands of Corsica and Sardinia this year and was present earlier in the year in Northeast Italy. Vaccination is mandatory on Corsica and particularly for any animals which leave the restriction zone. The cases in NE Italy were likely a result of spread from the neighbouring countries in the Balkans and SE region of Europe, where disease was circulating widely in previous years.

Surveillance around the infected calf's place of origin is being carried out and it will be interesting to understand the origin and infection status of the dam. BTV-4 is not known to be transplacentally transmitted, unlike BTV-8 (Darpel *et al.*, 2009), but without understanding the full viral characteristics it is too early to speculate. In experimental infections, passaged strains of BTV-1 and field strains of BTV-2 have been demonstrated to cause transplacental infection in sheep foetuses (van der Sluijs *et al.*, 2013; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2013). In terms of other disease sources, the distance from other areas reporting BTV-4 is probably too far for windborne transmission of midges without other cases being reported from other locations in between.

Conclusion

This new outbreak in France has no impact on the current risk level for the UK. Although inactivated BTV-4 vaccine is authorised for use in the EU, it is not currently available for distribution in the UK, except under a Special Import Certificate, but if the risk increases, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate are able to grant a marketing authorisation should the need arise.

We will continue to monitor the current situation in France and disseminate any further updates from the French Authorities, particularly with regards to the most recent cases and the BTV-4 situation.

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