African swine fever in wild boar in Belgium

Disease report

Since the first case reported on 13 September 2018, the Belgian Authorities have reported 245 cases of ASF in wild boar in the Luxembourg region of Belgium. There were a further 23 cases in wild boar in November and 53 cases in December (see map).

The region is close to the border with France, within a forested area of nearly 80 km². There is now concern that ASF will spread into wild boar in France. In Meix-devant-Virton, a Belgian border town not far from Thonne-La-Long (North-eastern France), 10 carcasses of wild boar were found on 20 Dec 2018 on the Belgian side behind the installed fences in the so-called peripheral zone in front of a container park. The test results are pending, but it is highly likely that cause of death was ASF. On 17 Dec 2018, another carcass was found not far from Gerouville (north-west of Meix-devant-Virton, 0.93 miles from the French border). That carcass was tested and found positive for ASFV. It is recognised that the erected fence will not stop ASF-infected wild boar from crossing into France, especially as this area is interspersed with roads of the Walloon automobile network and forest roads in Macadam. The distance between their site in Meix-devant-Virton and the French commune Thonne La-Long is just 3.5 miles as the crow flies.

Activities in the forest in Belgium are at a standstill. There are many other inherent issues, such as logging which is now prohibited in the forest, with consequent economic losses for this region.

To the 17th December 2018, a total of 680 wild boars had been sampled, 571 from the infected zone (Anon, 2018). There were 238 confirmed cases all in the high-risk zone II. In zone I (south) 213 wild boar were culled, all negative. In zone I (north) 38 wild boar were sampled, all negative. There have been no cases in domestic pigs, commercial or otherwise. The commercial pig sector is located over 200km away, in the Flanders region. Belgium remains free of ASF in domestic pigs.
The source and route of virus incursion into Belgium has not been confirmed, and investigations are continuing. The European Commission has confirmed that interim protective measures under 2002/60/EC Article 15 are in place, delineated by the border with Luxembourg and France. An Infected zone has been established (of 630 km²), within which there are strict biosecurity measures.

**Situation assessment**

Belgium has preventively culled all domestic pigs within the infected area (~5,000 pigs) including 6 small commercial holdings (farms with more than 50 pigs) and implemented a series of strict control measures to limit the spread of the disease (Portail de la Wallonie, 2018).

**Surveillance of Wild Boar**

*Outside the Infected Area:*

1. Raising awareness of hunters and visitors to the forests
2. Passive surveillance: all wild boar carcases must immediately be reported; sampling and analysis of dead wild boars, and disposal of the carcasses
3. Active surveillance: increased hunting, sampling and analysis of a proportion of hunted wild boars

*Within the infected area:*
Phase 1 (15 September – 14 October 2018)

4. Avoid moving wild boars and the dispersion of the disease
5. Ban on hunting and circulation of persons in the forest
6. Ban on hunting, supplemental feeding of wild boar and other game.
7. Active searching for wild boar carcases by trained personnel with secure removal of carcases.
8. Identify the territory actually contaminated and reduce risk of spreading
9. Controls on access to the forest, ban on all commercial and leisure activities with exemptions only for activities related to ASF control.
10. Setting up collection centres for carcass collection, sampling and disposal;
11. Collection and testing of all wild boar found dead.

Phase 2 (15th October – 18 December 2018)

Establishment of three zones inside the Infected Area:

The map above shows kernel and buffer zones in Belgium (taken from https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/animals/docs/ad_control-measures_asf_conf-20181219_pres-06.pdf) (Anon, 2018)
1. Kernel zone (Zone Noyau; 14,796 ha)
   a. Same measures as already in place for the infected area

2. Buffer zone (Zone Noyau et Tampon; 26,950 ha)
   a. All of the above and:
     b. Building a network of fences

3. Reinforcement Zone (Zone d’Observation rendorcée; 21,101 ha)
   a. Forest activities (logging and tourism) permitted in daylight hours;
   b. Ban of feeding wild boar;
   c. Increased passive surveillance;
   d. Active surveillance + Eradication of wild boars in the rest of the 630 km² area: culling and testing wild boar and disposal of carcases;
   e. Creation of a crawl space

Phase 3 (from 30th November 2018) (Anon, 2018)

Additional area (the vigilance zone) in the north of 630 km² where the surveillance and reduction of wild boar populations are reinforced with the aim of increasing results by 50%. Once the epidemic peak has passed, those wild boar that survived in the buffer zone will be destroyed followed by those in the core zone. In this area, it is proposed to support domestic pig producers, reimburse hunters for biosecurity measures, support forestry workers who have suffered economic losses, support butchers by buying all wild boars.

If ASF were to be detected in domestic pigs and captive wild boar/ feral pigs, the following measures would be introduced:

- No visitors are allowed access to establishments where pigs are held except for management of the holding;
- Access to establishments with pigs is forbidden for 72 hours following contact with wild boar;
- Increased surveillance: All sick pigs to be tested for ASF, regardless of clinical signs;
- Reinforced ban on swill feeding and no outdoor access for pigs unless property is double fenced;
- All assemblies and gatherings of pigs prohibited, including the loading of pigs of different origin on the same vehicle.
- Four week standstill for all newly introduced pigs;

France has also implemented controls in a reinforcement zone, comprising 53 communes in Ardennes, the Departments of Meuse and Meurthe-et-Moselle, which are within 10km of the Belgium infected zone, where hunting (without dogs) will be used to reduce the wild boar population and increased surveillance for dead wild boar is in place and in a wider observation zone, where there also measures for hunting, passive surveillance and awareness raising (Ministère d’Agriculture, 2018). This comes after a period of observation and hunting bans, as recommended by the Europe Commission veterinary expert team. The observation zone consists of 60 more communes in the same Departments.
In Luxemburg, there is a surveillance zone along the border with Belgium, in which there is increased surveillance for dead wild boar, hunting is allowed, and commercial outdoor pigs are being housed (Landwirtschafts portal, 2018).

**Conclusions**
The risk level for entry to the UK still remains at **MEDIUM**. The risk of exposure to the pig population in the UK is still highly dependent on the level of biosecurity on individual pig premises but is still considered to be **LOW**, although the situation is being kept under review. Under winter conditions, it is more difficult to effectively disinfect vehicles and equipment, and, the ASF virus persists at low temperatures for many weeks.

It is important to highlight that all products of porcine origin (including wild boar), unless processed by an approved process, are high risk commodities from affected areas. These products include fresh or frozen pig meat, salamis and hams, skins and bristles, germinal products, live animals, hunting trophies and any equipment which has had contact with an affected animal or the environment where they are found.

Pig keepers and veterinarians should remind themselves of the clinical signs for ASF and images and descriptions of clinical signs and pathology of ASF are provided on this link: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/defragovuk/sets/72157694954571532/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/defragovuk/sets/72157694954571532/)

We will continue to closely monitor the situation.

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**References**
All disease reports are available from the OIE WAHIS database.


http://www.wallonie.be/fr/actualites/mesures-de-lutte-contre-la-pesteporcine-africaine

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