

Updated Situation Assessment No.4

Bluetongue virus (BTV-8) in France

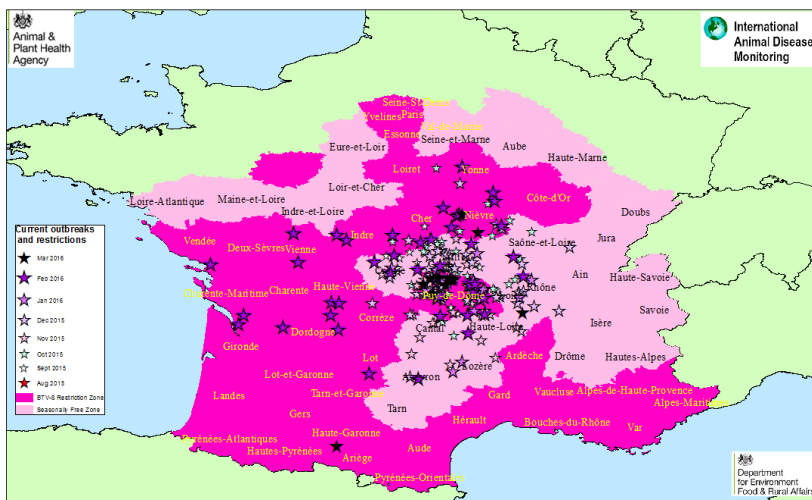
30th March 2016

Ref: VITT/1200 BTV-8 in France

Disease Report

France has now reported a total of 225 outbreaks of BTV-8, with new regions now affected: Arriège, Charente Maritime, Dordogne, Gironde, Indre, Lot, Rhone, Vienne and Haute Vienne since our last update in November 2015 (OIE, 2016; see map). As a result,

the restriction zones have been increased in size again, towards the south and west of the country (Ministère de L'Agriculture (FR), 2016). Of the 225 outbreaks, 4 are in mixed sheep and cattle holdings, 4 are in sheep only holdings and one in a goat holding. All the other outbreaks are in cattle holdings. The majority of affected holdings (210) have been detected by surveillance activities, not as



Map Prepared by IDIM
Absolute Scale 1:5,500,000 BTV-8 in France, current Restriction Zones* by date of map Date prepared 30/03/2016

* restriction zones are available on the French Min of Ag website
<http://agriculture.gouv.fr/liste-des-departements-et-de-s-communes-classes-en-zone-reglementee-fco>

reports of clinical disease in animals (either cattle or sheep). Those with clinical disease are located in Allier, Puy de Dome, Cher, Creuse, Nièvre and Lot. This continues to support the evidence that BTV-8 presents with few clinical signs in cattle.

Situation Assessment

The French Authorities are carrying out a level of surveillance over the winter months to inform three objectives: to determine the geographic distribution of BTV-8 and hence the size of the restriction zones; to demonstrate seasonally free zones whereby trade can continue for unvaccinated animals under bilateral agreements with accepting Member States; to estimate the prevalence in cattle according to their immune status and age (Bournez et al., 2016). As a result, several affected holdings have been identified in new regions where cattle have tested positive by PCR. The test used may detect historical infection, and is not necessarily indicative of current virus circulation, but may be indicative of animal movement in recent weeks. Generally, it is still early in the year for vector activity and hence virus circulation for bluetongue in Northern Europe and we consider this year to

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be no different. Nevertheless, restriction zones have been increased accordingly to ensure safe trade.

The French risk assessment agency, ANSES, has conducted a thorough risk assessment into the origin of disease and likely virus circulation, which suggested that the likely source was a continual low level of circulation since the previous epizootic in 2007-2008, where lack of clinical signs meant passive surveillance alone would not have detected disease (Anses, 2015). In 2015 this low level of virus circulation was present in a relatively localised area with an epicentre located between Allier and Puy de Dome regions and decreasing with distance. Culicoides midges were active until mid-December across this region and the winter surveillance will be analysed over the coming weeks to inform further opinions. Vaccination continues, concentrating on animals in pedigree breeding programmes and animals destined for export or moving out of the restricted zone, and this limited level of vaccination, compared to the total livestock population in these areas, means the wind-borne spread of infected vectors when the new season occurs is inevitable, with the most likely countries at risk being those near the borders with the restriction zones, such as Spain, Italy and Switzerland.

Conclusion

The UK has no bilateral agreement with France to accept unvaccinated animals from a BTV-seasonally free area.

The winter surveillance in France has shown there is a wider area than originally thought, where a low level of infection may be present. Whilst this presents as a low impact disease in affected cattle, but this may not be the case next year when higher infection pressure (more vectors, higher biting rates and higher virus loads) leads to more cases. It is still difficult to predict when virus will start to circulate again, but previous data from the 2007 / 2008 epizootic suggests July was when disease re-emerged and started to spread, as the average daily temperature will be high enough for significant numbers of midge vectors to transmit disease in Northern Europe. We will continue to report monitor the current situation in France and report any further updates from their Authorities.

Authors

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