

Updated Outbreak Assessment #02

African Swine fever in Europe (Eastern Europe & Belgium)

18 July 2019

Ref: VITT/1200 ASF in Europe (Eastern Europe & Belgium)

Disease report

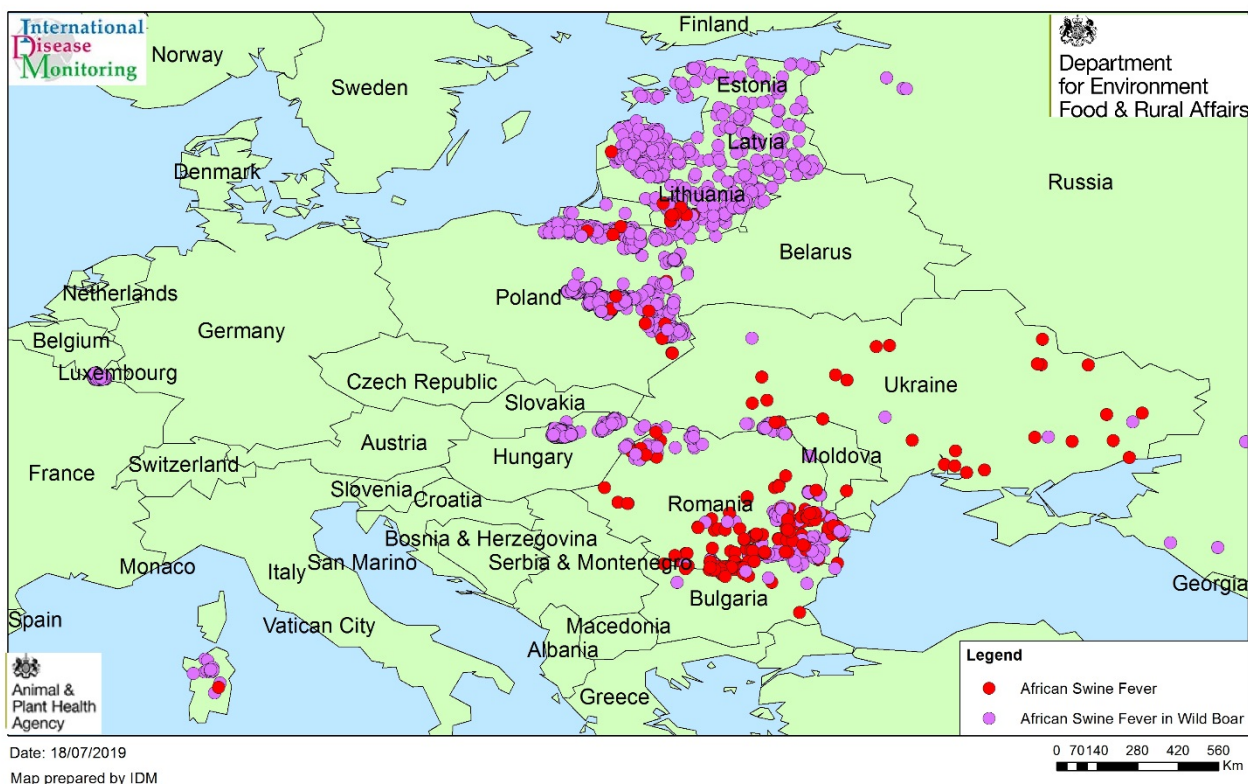
Since our last report on the 25th June 2019, there have been new outbreaks of ASF in domestic pigs in Eastern Europe, and further cases in wild boar in both Eastern Europe and Belgium.

The numbers of outbreaks in domestic pigs (backyard and commercial) since January 2019 are summarised in Table 1 for each affected country. Generally, there has continued to be low number of outbreaks reported in domestic pigs since January 2019, though there have been notable increases observed in Romania (205) and Bulgaria (15). Other reports in July to date are restricted to Poland (11), Lithuania (5), Latvia (1), Russia (3) and Ukraine (5). The largest number of outbreaks in domestic pigs each month continues to be in Romania, mainly in backyard pig small-holdings, though since our last report on the 25th of June, there have been an additional 281 outbreaks in small commercial holdings.

The number of cases in wild boar continues to be high in Poland, with 114 cases in June and 65 in July so far, while cases in Hungary appear to be continuing a downward trend (Table 2). Generally, the number of reported cases in wild boar in Eastern Europe has been decreasing through 2019, though further monitoring is required to confirm if this indicates a trend or is simply due to seasonality, as this does not match the recent increase observed in outbreaks in domestic pigs.

There have been no new large geographical jumps so far in 2019, and increased numbers of ASF-positive domestic pigs may be related to local spread or increased surveillance activities. The last significant jump of ASF within Europe was the emergence of ASF in Belgium in September 2018, where there have been 825 cases of ASF in wild boar (reports of ASF in wild boar to 16/07/2019 (Wallonie, 2019).

In June 2019, as part of their routine activities, port authorities in Northern Ireland seized a total of 300 kg of meat and dairy products illegally brought into NI by passengers during the month. A sample of one of these seizures; a sausage originating from Asia, was tested at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), resulting in the detection of ASF virus DNA fragments. Though the presence of ASF DNA does not necessarily mean that the meat was infectious, it further underlines the potential risk to the UK from pork and pork products being brought illegally into the country by international air passengers.



African swine fever in domestic pigs and wild suidae since January 2019

The map shows the ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs and cases in wild boar since January 2019.

Table 1. Numbers of ASF outbreaks reported in domestic pigs (backyard and commercial) between January 2019 and July 2019 to date.

Country	Number of Outbreaks in domestic pigs (Jan-July 18 th 2019)							
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Total
Belgium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
Czech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Latvia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Lithuania	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	10
Moldova	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Poland	1	0	0	0	2	7	11	21
Romania	29	32	12	9	22	76	205	385
Russia	0	0	1	0	0	1	3	5
Ukraine	3	3	1	5	3	4	5	24
Total	33	35	15	14	27	93	245	462

Table 2. Numbers of ASF cases in wild boar between January 2019 and July 2019 to date.

Number of cases in Wild Boar (Jan 2019 – July 18 th 2019)								
Country	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Total
Belgium	76	195	94	58	44	9	0	476
Bulgaria	0	3	7	1	0	1	6	18
Czech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estonia	28	16	1	1	0	4	2	52
Hungary	104	148	226	155	62	37	16	748
Latvia	87	22	10	9	16	16	24	184
Lithuania	81	29	58	29	43	38	31	309
Moldova	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Poland	284	224	246	259	199	114	65	1391
Romania	59	72	50	39	33	36	28	317
Russia	0	2	2	0	3	0	4	11
Ukraine	0	4	1	2	0	0	0	7
Total	719	715	695	553	401	255	176	3514

Belgium and bordering countries:

Since the first reported outbreak of ASF in Belgium, there have been 825 cases reported in wild boar, while domestic pigs, including the commercial sector, remain free of the disease. The original source and route of virus incursion into Belgium has not been confirmed, and investigations are continuing. As of 4th July 2019, the surveillance and eradication programme in Belgium has led to the sampling of 3,261 wild boar, of which 825 were confirmed positive (PAFF, July 2019). The majority of animals sampled were with surveillance zones and close to the French border. Belgium aim to cull out the wild boar population by 31st December 2019 within the annexed areas (2014/709/EU; PAFF, July 2019).

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. Following the presentation of their ASF eradication plan to PAFF, Belgium have recently banned feeding and hunting of wild boar in Part II of the annexed area (Walloonie, 2019) and limited access to the forest in the area. They have also completed a fence network on the northern, western and southern sides of the buffer zone, with other fences to be built, to prevent the movement of potentially infected wild boar. Further control measures have been implemented to ensure domestic pigs remain ASF free, such as: preventing visitors to pig farms unless needed, raising awareness in farmers, hunters and vets, increasing biosecurity and increased surveillance; with 5,781 pigs tested on 1,234 farms (PAFF, July 2019). On 28th June 2019, Walloon's Agriculture Minister extended the ASF surveillance area in the south east of the country, closer to the border with Luxembourg, following the discovery of ASF positive wild boar carcasses.

The number of outbreaks in wild boar continues to decrease, which could be reflecting a successful eradication programme. We will continue to monitor the situation.

France has also undertaken surveillance sampling of wild boar carcasses across the country, with the highest numbers of samples collected from wild boar carcasses along the border with Belgium, with all 337 samples negative to 04/07/2019.

In Luxemburg, active surveillance and prevention measures have been implemented, including testing wild boar carcasses and fencing built between Luxemburg and Belgium along the Zone Blanche (white surveillance zone), which reaches into France (PAFF, 2019; Plateforme, 2019). Hunting is carried out in about 85% of the country, and wild boar hunting is allowed throughout the year without quotas. From September 2018 to end April 2019, 173 carcasses were tested for ASF, collected from across the country, all with negative results. On 4th and 5th July 2019, a wild boar hunt was organised in the surveillance ("white") zone along the Belgium-Luxembourg border in an attempt to prevent the spread of the African swine fever virus in to Luxemburg. During the hunt, seven wild boar were shot and two carcasses were found; though one carcass could not be tested, all other results were negative for ASF (RTL, 2019).

Bulgaria:

In July 2019, Bulgaria reported ASF outbreaks in domestic pigs for the first time since August 2018. To date 15 outbreaks have been reported in backyard pigs, the majority of which are in close proximity to the Romanian border (see map above), and where there has been a recent increase in the number of reported outbreaks on both sides of the border. Control measures have been applied, including the culling of all domestic pigs within 3km of outbreaks, cleansing and disinfection, clinical examinations, sampling within 10km of outbreaks, and movement restrictions (PAFF, July 2019). Though epidemiological investigations are still ongoing, the most likely source of infection has been hypothesised as reintroduction of the disease via mechanical routes e.g. contaminated vehicles (PAFF, July 2019). Within wild boar, the number of reported cases remains low though this may increase with enhanced surveillance; we will continue to monitor the situation.

Czech Republic:

Following no reported outbreaks of ASF in domestic pigs or wild boar since February 2018, the eradication of the disease in Czech Republic was confirmed in February 2019 (Europa 2019).

Hungary:

The decreasing trend of ASF cases in wild boar observed since the peak of cases reported in March 2019, appears to be continuing (Table 2). Since our last report on 25th June 2019, there have been 21 cases reported, with 16 in July so far. The majority of the cases have been observed in the northern counties, near the Slovakian border, where the disease has not yet been reported, and Romanian border a likely source of infection.

Lithuania:

Since our last report on 25th June, Lithuania has reported six more outbreaks in domestic pigs to date, including the discovery of an unidentified domestic pig which had been buried by its owner.

Moldova:

Moldova has not reported an outbreak of ASF in domestic pigs since March 2019, or in wild boar since May 2019.

Poland:

Since our last report on 25th June, Poland has reported 14 new outbreaks in domestic pigs to date). Five of these were on commercial properties, including one large farm in Lubelski, with over 1300 animals. However, the number of wild boar cases has been generally decreasing (Table 2). We will continue to monitor the situation.

Romania:

There has been a significant increase in the number of outbreaks in domestic pigs reported by Romania, with 281 reported between June and July to date (Table 1). The majority of these outbreaks have been reported in backyard small holdings, though there have been a few cases in small commercial premises (defined as having more than 60 animals). The Romanian Authorities perform controls on holdings that pose a high risk for ASF, focussing on holdings with more than five animals, selling without legal documents and not notifying the National Database of pig movement. The official control campaign is underway, but results to date June 2019 demonstrated that almost 22% percent of holdings were non-compliant in the Part III area (European Commission, July 2019), including the feeding of pigs with household waste (PAFF, July 2019). Following these results, legislative changes are being drafted on minimum biosecurity conditions, animal movements, and to establish sanctions for contraventions.

Though the identification of these non-compliant, high risk holdings may explain in part the epidemiological situation regarding ASF in Romania, this cannot alone explain the sudden, significant increase in the number of outbreaks. EFSA have hypothesised, that the existence of possible risk factors such as haematophagic insects and favourable weather conditions, could have accentuated the rapid dissemination of the virus over the summer (EFSA, 2019). Elsewhere, colleagues in Denmark have demonstrated ASF infection can occur in domestic pigs following the ingestion of infected stable flies (PigProgress 2019), albeit under laboratory conditions, and may explain the large number of outbreaks in the summer months.

Russia:

The number of reported outbreaks in Russia in 2019 remains low, with three outbreaks in backyard pigs reported in July so far, and four cases reported in wild boar in July so far. All outbreaks and cases have been reported from the western districts of Ulyanovskaya, Nizhegorodskaya and Novgorodskaya.

Ukraine:

Ukraine has reported six new outbreaks in domestic pigs since our last report on 25th June (three backyard and three commercial).

Situation assessment

Eastern Europe is continuing to report outbreaks of ASF in domestic pigs, although this appears to be restricted to the south-east countries in the region; namely Ukraine, and Romania, with a small number of outbreaks reported in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Russia. However, while control efforts may be reducing incidence in domestic pigs (with the exception of Romania and Bulgaria), the wild boar population represents a significant reservoir in Eastern Europe which may hinder eradication, and serve as a source for further geographic jumps, along with the potential for arthropod vectors of disease to contribute.

Conclusion

There has been an increase in the number of outbreaks reported in domestic pigs in Eastern Europe in June compared to recent months, indicating that the disease is still present across much

of the region, with large numbers of cases in wild boar continuing. Given the ongoing situation in Eastern Europe, continued reports of ASF in wild boar in Belgium, as well as the ongoing disease situation in South East Asia, the risk therefore remains at **medium** for the entry of contaminated or infected products into UK.

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.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

We would like to highlight to all pig keepers and the public the importance of ensuring pigs are not fed catering waste, kitchen scraps or pork products, thereby observing the swill feeding ban. All pig keepers should be aware that visitors to their premises should not have had recent contact with pigs and pig premises in the affected regions. Anybody returning from any ASF-affected area should avoid contact with domestic pigs, whether commercial holdings or smallholdings, areas with feral pigs or wild boar, until they are confident they have no contaminated clothing, footwear or equipment. Pig keepers and veterinarians should remind themselves of the clinical signs for ASF. Any suspect cases must be reported promptly. See: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/african-swine-fever>

We would like to remind the public that any feeding of meat products, including the feeding of swill, kitchen scraps and catering waste, to wild boar or feral pigs is also illegal. A poster reminding pig keepers of this is available: <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/surveillance/diseases/african-swine-fever-poster.pdf>

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