

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

Equine Infectious Anaemia in France

20 May 2020

Ref: VITT/1200 EIA in France

Disease report

France has reported an outbreak of equine infectious anaemia (EIA) affecting one horse in the Gard region in Southern France (see map). This is the first reported outbreak in France this year.



Date: 19/05/2020
Map prepared by IDM

Equine infectious anaemia in France, May 2020

Situation assessment

On 18 May, a 19 year old mare was reported to have EIA, following a positive result for the Coggin's Test (OIE, 2020). The premises in Canaules et Argentières, held 11 susceptible animals in total. The affected horse has since been killed and disposed of and the outbreak investigation is ongoing. Disease control measures have been put in place and the holding is currently under restriction

Equine infectious anaemia is reported periodically in equidae in Western Europe. In the EU, two countries are considered endemic for EIA. These are Romania and Italy (Roberts, 2017). Elsewhere this year, single outbreaks have been reported in Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria. Last year, five outbreaks were reported in France, with cases also reported in Greece, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria (ADNS, 2020).

The internationally recognised trade test is the Coggins test, which is a serological test using immune-diffusion against a positive antiserum. It relies on reading the test after 24 to 48 hours and has high test sensitivity according to the OIE terrestrial manual. Horses in the early stages of infection may not give a positive reaction and suspect cases that initially test negative should be retested 3 – 4 weeks later (OIE, 2013).

EIA is a disease that can remain clinically “silent” in infected horses for several years and then may become clinically apparent e.g. as a result of the horse being stressed, or may be detected when the horse is tested for routine surveillance. The disease is slow spreading and can be transmitted sexually, iatrogenically (using surgical equipment without appropriate disinfection, infected blood products etc), and through mechanical vector transmission by biting flies.

The last outbreak of EIA in the UK was in 2012, when horses known to have originated in Romania several years previously, tested positive. There was no spread from these cases during the residency period in the UK, despite the presence of biting flies being likely during those five years.

Conclusion

We currently consider there is a **medium** risk that we may detect a case of EIA in the UK in any one year. This risk is not changed by this latest case in France. This risk estimate reflects the lack of routine surveillance and the non-specific nature of clinical signs for EIA, particularly with respect to the non-competition and non-thoroughbred horse population. For our high value, competition horses there is generally a higher level of awareness of the clinical signs and requirement to report disease among keepers.

This is a timely event to remind keepers of horses and other equidae that the infection can remain subclinical for several years and recent imports are not necessarily the only animals which could test positive for EIA. It is therefore important to be aware of all the clinical signs of EIA and other notifiable diseases of horses and to promptly report suspicions of disease to a veterinary surgeon. The Horse Racing Betting & Levy Board Codes of Practice have further information about what to do if disease is suspected (HBLB, 2018) and Roberts (2017) summarises simple biosecurity rules for all horse keepers which would make the transmission of EIA less likely.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

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References

All disease reports are available from the OIE WAHIS database.

OIE (2013) Chapter 2.5.6 of the OIE Terrestrial Manual on Equine Infectious Anaemia
http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahm/2.05.06_EIA.pdf

Roberts, H. (2017) Equine infectious anaemia in Europe: an ongoing threat to the UK. The Veterinary Record, October 2017, p 443-446.
(<https://veterinaryrecord.bmj.com/content/181/17/442>)

Horserace Betting Levy Board (HBLB) (2018) Codes of Practice. <http://codes.hblb.org.uk/>



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