

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment

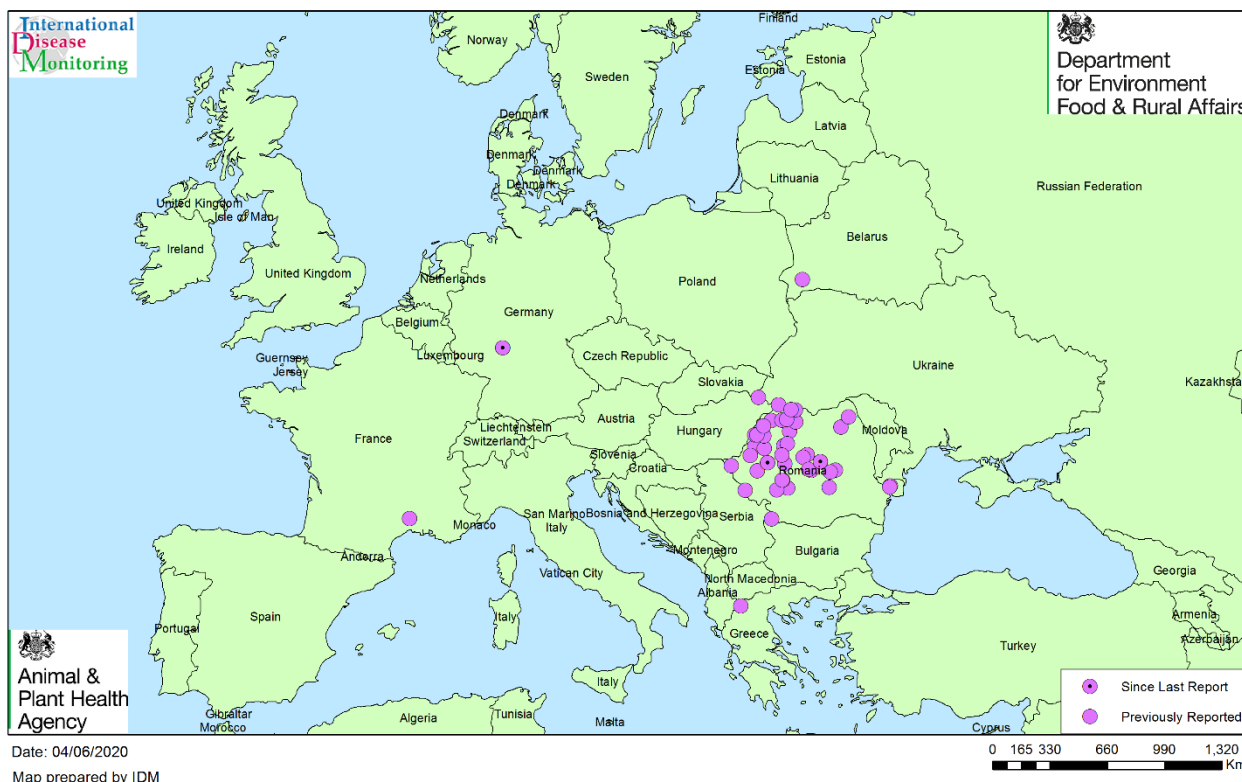
Equine Infectious Anaemia in Germany

4th June 2020

Ref: VITT/1200 EIA in Germany

Disease Report

Germany has reported an outbreak of equine infectious anaemia (EIA) affecting one equid (presumably a horse) in the federal state of Hesse in Western Germany (see map). This is the first reported outbreak in Germany since June 2017 and follows an outbreak in France last month.



Equine Infectious Anaemia in Europe, January 2020 - Present

Situation Assessment

On 2 June 2020, a single equid was confirmed to have equine infectious anaemia virus (EIAV), following suspicion of disease on the 27 May according to ADNS. It was reported to OIE on 4 June. The premises in the Landkreis (Municipality) of Offenbach am Main in Hesse held seven susceptible animals (equidae) in total. The affected animal has since been euthanized and disposed of and the outbreak investigation is ongoing. Disease

control measures have been put in place and the holding is currently under restriction. Germany last reported EIA at the end of June 2017 (FLI, 2020) with 11 polo horses from seven holdings across the federal states of Hamburg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Bavaria. In 2017, the Netherlands also reported one case in a polo horse.

EIA is a systemic virus infection which affects horses, ponies, donkeys, mules and zebras mainly occurring in North and South America, Africa, Asia, Australia as well as in Southern and Eastern Europe. In the EU, two countries are considered endemic for EIA. These are Romania and Italy (Roberts, 2017). EIA is reported sporadically in equidae in Western Europe. Elsewhere this year, single outbreaks have been reported in Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria with France reporting its first case this year last month. 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 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 (by medical treatment, in particular when one needle/syringe is used for several animals, infected blood products) and through mechanical vector transmission by large blood-sucking insects, such as horseflies and stable flies. Transmission of the disease is also possible through direct contact between horses (blood, small wounds).

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.

According to TRACES, some 209 consignments of horses have been imported into the UK this year from Germany. Of these 14 were from regions of Germany 60 km to 90 km from the location of this outbreak, while one consignment in March was from a race-course near Frankfurt approximately 35 km from this case.

Conclusion

The risk that a case of EIA occurs in the UK in any one year is currently considered to be **medium**. This risk is not changed by this latest case in Germany which follows on closely from the outbreak in southern France in May. 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. Thus infected horses could be imported which may not show clinical signs for several months or years. For high value, competition horses in the UK there is generally a higher level of awareness of the clinical signs and requirement to report disease among keepers.

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It is timely 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.

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