

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment #1

Sheep and goat pox in Southern Spain

20 September 2022

Ref: SGP in Spain

Disease report

The Official Veterinary Services (OVS) of the Junta de Andalucía in Southern Spain reported an outbreak of sheep and goat pox virus (SGPV) on 19 September 2022, at a breeding sheep farm. The farm has 314 sheep and 11 goats, and is located in the municipality of Benamaurel, in the province of Granada (Figure 1). The suspicion arose from the detection of clinical signs and lesions compatible with the disease which started on 14 September. The OVS detected 50 clinically affected sheep (including 30 dead animals). Testing by the National Reference Laboratory in Spain confirmed the samples to be positive by RT-PCR and sequencing for sheep pox virus.

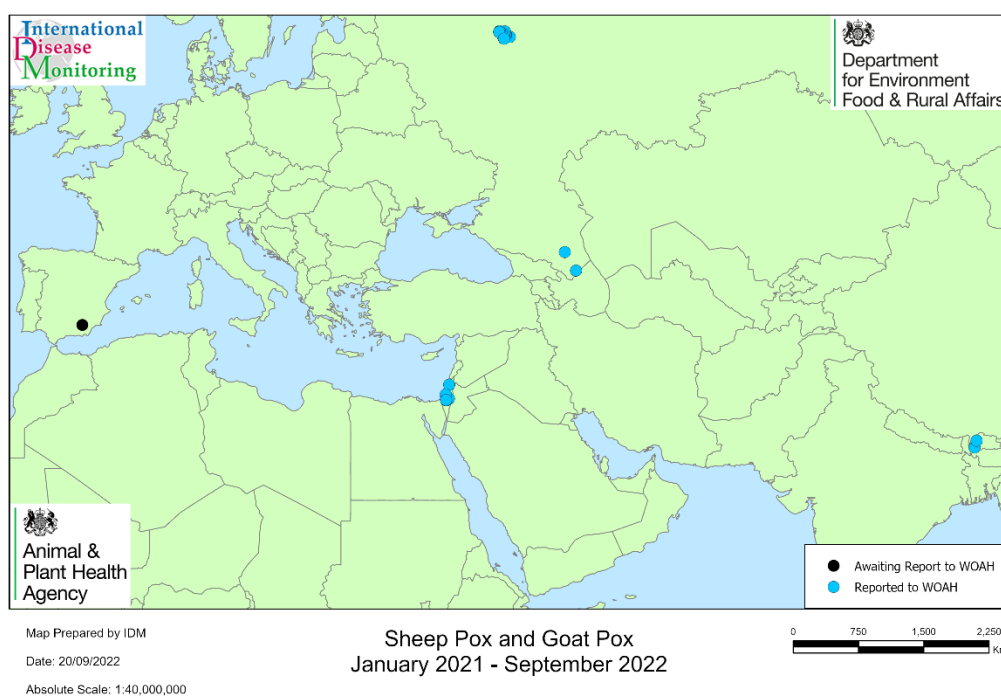


Figure 1 Sheep and goat pox outbreaks reported on WOAH since January 2021, including the outbreak in southern Spain in September 2022.

The Andalusian authorities have implemented control measures under Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/687; including the culling of all susceptible animals, safe disposal of carcasses in a disposal plant, official cleaning and disinfection of the emptied farm, establishment of a 3km protection zone and a 10km surveillance zone with enhanced biosecurity and surveillance measures. In addition, measures have been applied to restrict the movement of animals and products. Epidemiological

investigations are underway to identify the origin of the virus, and trace the possible spread that may have occurred.

Situation assessment

SGP is a viral disease that generally only affects sheep and goats. Usually the disease is transmitted by direct contact between animals in pens or in groups or gatherings e.g. at pasture, in markets, or through inhalation of aerosols of saliva, nasal, respiratory and conjunctival secretions. Transmission by indirect contact with contaminated environments and fomites including wool and hair is possible but less frequent than direct transmission (Sprygin et al. 2019). Indirect transmission through contaminated vehicles, bedding, fodder or animal products (e.g. wool) is also possible. Virus is also abundant in skin lesions and scabs, and is viable for months in the environment (Kitching 2004; Bowden et al. 2008). SGPV can also be transmitted mechanically by biting insects such as stable flies (Bhanuprakash et al. 2006).

New introductions of SGP are generally only identified in one of the 2 animal species concerned (i.e. goats or sheep) depending on the strain introduced, so that goat pox was introduced into Bangladesh in 1984 from India, and sheep pox has caused occasional outbreaks in Italy (1983), Greece (1988, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2000) and Bulgaria (1995 and 1996) having spread from Turkey, probably in illegally imported animals (Kitching 2004).

SGP was eradicated from Spain in 1968. Sporadic outbreaks of SGP have occurred in Southern Europe over the last decade (Tuppurainen et al 2017). During 2013 outbreaks of SGP were recorded in Bulgaria and Greece, with Israel affected in 2014. Since 1 January 2021 (to 20 September 2022) there have been 38 outbreaks reported on WOAHP for SGP. These were in Bhutan, Israel, Mongolia and western Russia. SGP is endemic in much of northern and central Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Tuppurainen et al. 2017; Hamdi et al. 2021). Turkey reported 217 outbreaks of SGP on ADIS in 2021 (ADIS 2021) and have reported 122 so far in 2022 (ADIS 2022).

Great Britain (GB) has not received any imports of live sheep and goats from Spain in the last 2 months (to 20 September 2022). While GB received imports from Germany, Austria, Netherlands and Republic of Ireland, none of these consignments originated in Spain. In July 2022 a total of 1,200 units of sheep skin hides (847 kg) were imported from Spain. Some 73 tonnes of wool were also imported from Spain in July 2022. Assuming similar imports in August and September, and on the basis that there is just a single outbreak in Spain, the risk of importation of at least one infected hide or wool bale is estimated to be very low at present through this pathway.

Conclusions

An outbreak of sheep pox virus has been reported in a single farm in southern Spain in September 2022.

While no live sheep or goats have been imported from Spain, importation of wool and sheep hides occurs monthly. Based on the sporadic nature of the outbreak in

Spain, the disease report and situation assessment, the risk of introduction of SGP to the UK through all pathways is currently considered to be LOW. APHA's IDM Team are monitoring the situation.

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