Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment #1

African Swine Fever in Sweden

12 September 2023

Disease Report

African swine fever (ASF) has been reported for the first time in Sweden. As of 6 September 2023, the Swedish National Veterinary Institute (SVA) reported that ASF has been detected in a sample from a dead wild boar found southeast of Fagersta in the county of Västmanland, 145 km northwest of Stockholm in Sweden. This follows reports of 6 wild boars found dead along with 1 diseased boar positive for ASF, which was euthanised in the Fagersta municipality on 27 August (SVA 2023). As of the 11 September 2023 WOAH has confirmed a total of 6 outbreaks of ASF in this region.

At present, it is not known how the virus was introduced into Sweden or the genotype of the virus. The nearest recent detections of ASF to Sweden are in Latvia and Poland (WOAH). However, Sweden is over 400km from these areas and is separated by the Baltic Sea. Large geographical jumps in ASF in Europe are well documented generally being detected in wild boar first, as in Belgium in 2018 and in north-west Italy in 2022. Currently, the SVA assume that the most likely route of entry is human mediated and not wild boar movement. The Swedish authorities have since put into place measures in accordance with Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2023/594; these include restriction zones around the affected areas approximately 20km wide, mapping out the areas and testing wild boars. Additionally, pig owners are being encouraged to review biosecurity and to contact a veterinarian if there are signs of disease or increased mortality (SVA 2023).

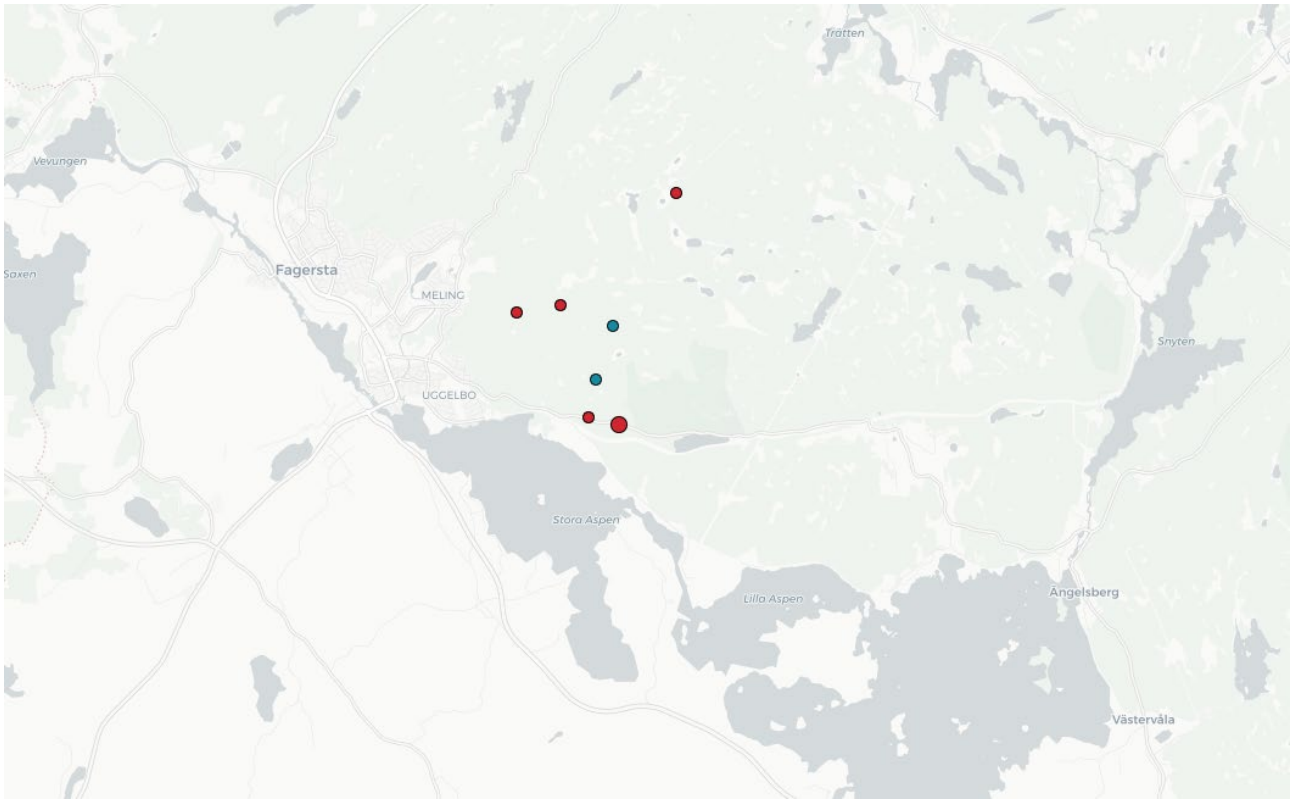

Figure 1: Map showing 6 wild boar cases positive for ASF as red dots (Large red dot represents 2 cases) and 2 untested boars (Blue dots) which died nearby, east of Fagersta Sweden between 6 September and 12 September (Source: [ASF outbreaks (windows.net)] Accessed on 12 September 2023).

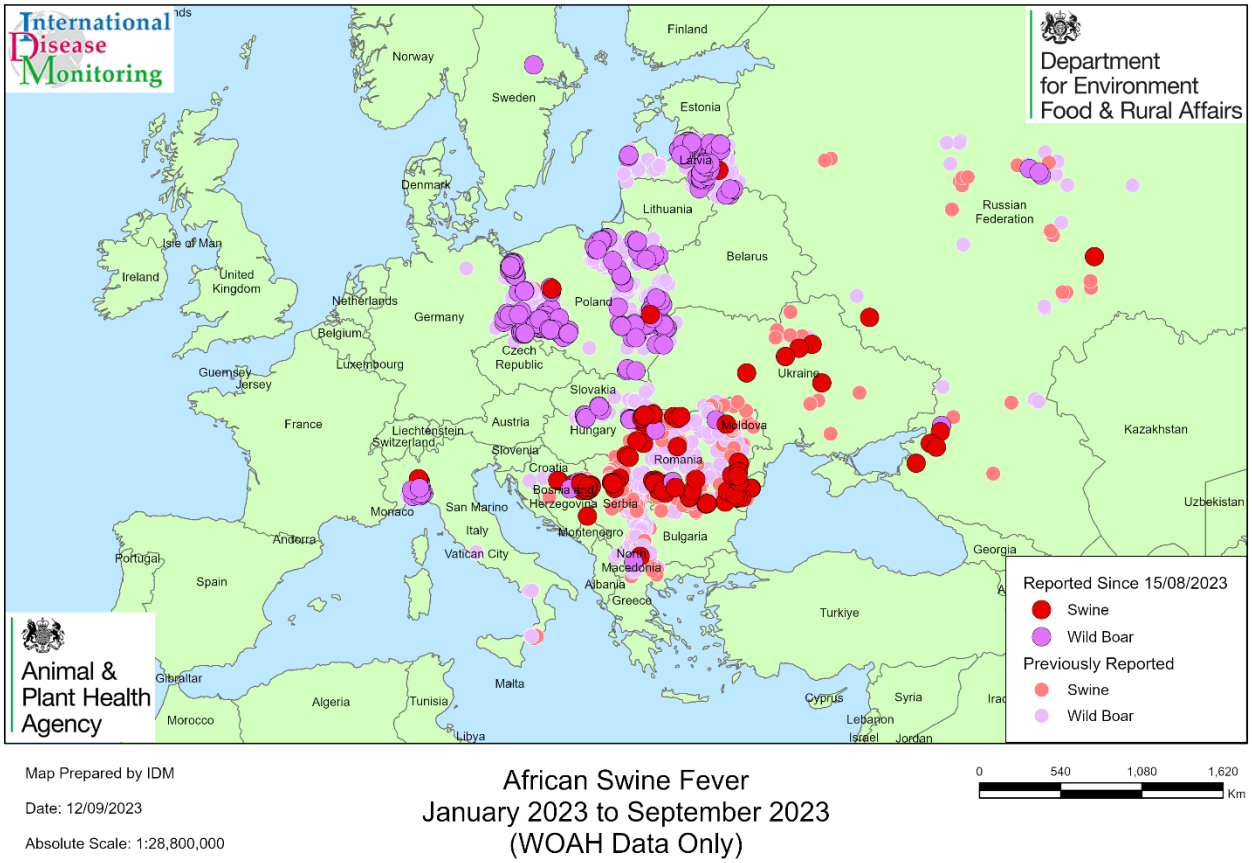

Figure 2: Cases of African swine fever in wild boar and outbreaks in domestic pigs in Europe reported to WOAH from 1 January to 12 September 2023.

Situation Assessment

Although the overall number of outbreaks in both domestic pigs and wild boar have decreased considerably since 2022, ASF is still circulating in wild boar across much of eastern Europe. We have also seen recent increases of outbreaks in Balkans pig farms as well (EFSA 2023). ASF still remains a threat, and EU pork production at its lowest level in almost a decade. According to recent reports this is a consequence of ASF limiting export opportunities, input costs increasing and consumer cost of living being given as reasons (AHDB 2023).

It should be noted that the first outbreaks of the year in domestic pigs in Poland and Latvia are consistent with seasonal increases in domestic pig outbreaks seen in previous years in Poland, Romania, Lithuania and Slovakia (EFSA, 2022). The cause of these seasonal increases is yet to be determined. The EFSA (2019) report highlights that the natural median spread of ASF due to wild boar movement was between 2.9-11.7 km/year. This report also documented that human mediated translocation of ASF remains an important contributing factor for long distance spread of ASF. This is supported by, previous long-distance 'jumps' of ASF to domestic pigs in western Germany in summer 2022, which were thought to have been facilitated by movements of seasonal workers, and this may explain how ASF entered Sweden.

It remains a critical time for the spread of the virus throughout Europe as well as into other regions through human-mediated routes such as introduction from non-commercial imports (including illegal imports) or fomites. On 1 September 2022, strict new controls were introduced restricting the movement of pork and pork products into Great Britain from the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association states. It is no longer legal to personally bring in pork or pork products weighing over 2 kilograms unless they are produced to the EU's commercial standards. This does not apply to commercial imports, which remain unaffected by the control, but Great Britain will be bringing in further controls. Although this legislation does not currently apply to non-commercial imports of pork products less than 2 kg from the EU, all travellers are strongly advised to avoid bringing, buying, ordering on the internet, or requesting any pork products – for example, fresh or frozen meat, dried or cured meats, sausages, salamis, or pâté – back to the Great Britain from affected parts of Europe. It remains illegal for travellers to import meat or dairy products from Asia and other non-EU country areas.

Swill feeding any animal, whether pigs, poultry, ruminants, or wildlife is illegal and has the potential to cause substantial harm. We would like to emphasise to all pig keepers, pig producers, smallholders, and the general public to ensure pigs are not fed catering waste, kitchen scraps or pork products, thereby observing the swill feeding ban. All pig keepers, whether commercial holdings or not, should remain vigilant and ensure that any visitors or seasonal workers have not had any recent contact with pigs, pig products, pig premises, wild boar (including hunting) or equipment associated with such activities in the affected regions in Europe or other affected parts of the world. As with all biosecurity, these measures are only as effective as the people using them, so proper training should be provided.

Conclusion

For the first time, an outbreak of ASF in wild boar has been documented in Sweden. There is a significant distance between this outbreak and the recent outbreaks occurring in mainland Europe, including the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, EFSA (2019) report predicted that the natural median spread of ASF due to wild boar movements was between 2.9-11.7 km/year. This report also emphasised that human mediated translocation of ASF remains an important contributing factor to disease spread. The most likely cause of entry into Sweden is human-mediated transmission as opposed to the movement of wild boar, as it is unlikely that wild boars were able to cross the Baltic Sea. Details of the genotype are unknown at this time and may reveal the origin. Further details of entry are expected following the initial reports, which we will monitor closely.

Additionally, there are only a small number of trade consignments of live pigs received in Great Britain from Sweden, none of which have occurred since 15 June 2023. Given the above, we consider that the risk of entry of ASF virus in live animals and products of animal origin (POAO) from affected countries, remains at **MEDIUM** (occurs regularly).

The potential high risk for non-commercial imports of pork products from ASF affected areas remains of high concern. Evidence from inspections at Great Britain ports suggest that there are several vehicles illegally bringing pork meat into Great Britain from some regions of the EU affected by ASF. Some of these instances involved large quantities of porcine POAO, some of which appear to be home-slaughtered and arrive in Great Britain from an undisclosed origin as a non-commercial import, with poor levels of biosecurity and food hygiene. Therefore, the risk of ASF entering Great Britain, from the human-mediated pathway and moving porcine POAO, is considered to remain at **HIGH** (occurs very often).

Pig keepers and veterinarians should remind themselves of the clinical signs for ASF. Any suspect cases must be reported promptly. Please see https://www.gov.Great Britain /guidance/african-swine-fever for more information.

We will continue to monitor the situation.

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This publication is available at https://www.gov.Great Britain/government/collections/animal-diseasesinternational-monitoring.

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