

Updated Situation Assessment No.2

Bluetongue virus (BTV-8) in France

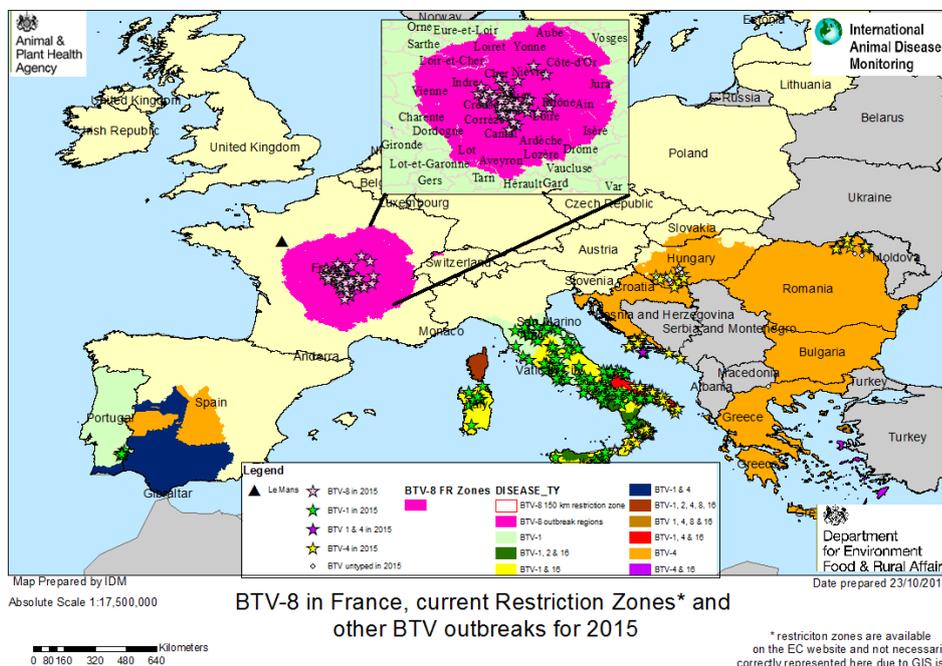
23rd October 2015

Ref: VITT/1200 BTV-8 in France

Disease Report

France has now reported a total of 56 outbreaks of BTV-8 in Allier, Cantal, Cher, Creuse, Loire, Saone et Loire, Nièvre and Puy de Dome regions, Central France (OIE, 2015; see map). As a result, the restriction zones have been increased in size (Ministère de

L'Agriculture (FR), 2015) but have also now been merged into one single restriction zone, to allow the movement of animals within this area. Of the 56 outbreaks, 2 are in mixed sheep and cattle holdings, 3 are in sheep only holdings and the other 41 outbreaks are in cattle. Ten outbreaks were identified as a result



of clinical signs reported to the French veterinary authorities. The rest are a result of the widespread active surveillance which is being carried out.

Situation Assessment

The French Authorities have been undertaking a wide surveillance programme (design prevalence of 5% and 95% confidence) across breeding cattle in mainland France. To do so, 30 farms with breeding cattle have been randomly assigned for each of the 21 regions and 60 cattle from each farm were tested (provided 60 were present) (Bournez et al. 2015). A full description of the surveillance programme can be found at <https://info.agriculture.gouv.fr/gedei/site/bo-agri/instruction-2015-785>. To date, a total of ~38,400 cattle on over 1,300 holdings have been tested. Where a positive farm has been identified, in the majority of cases only one cattle tested positive out of the 60 sampled. In addition, report cases are made as part of the passive surveillance programme in France,

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where animals showing clinical signs suggestive of notifiable disease are followed up. The number of monthly reports has significantly increased, showing the increased awareness of farmers and vets, with over 140 suspicions since mid-September. A map of these cases is also available from Bournez et al.

Given the increased restriction zones, TRACES, the EU trade notification system, has been further interrogated, looking at consignments since mid-June 2015. There have been several direct cattle, sheep and goat consignments from regions which are now under the increased restriction zones, so livestock owners should be aware of the possible risk and consult with their veterinary surgeon prior to arranging trade from France. All consignments tested after arrival in the UK (for compliance purposes under the Vet Checks Directive, 90/425/EEC) have tested negative.

At the recent PAFF meeting in Brussels, France presented their surveillance information and latest results. On genotype sequence sampling, full typing is still underway, but to date, 95% of the sequence shows full homology to the strain circulating in 2007 in Northern Europe, including the UK. Vaccine stocks are limited and therefore vaccination is prioritised for herds where at least animal has been confirmed with disease (from surveillance for example), animals in specific breeding programmes and animals destined for EU trade and under certain bilateral agreements for third country exports.

http://ec.europa.eu/food/committees/regulatory/scfcah/animal_health/docs/ag_2015100708-bt-france_en.pdf

Conclusion

The risk of introduction from France to the UK at present is considered to be very low. It could occur through several pathways:

1. Via infected midges. Currently considered negligible risk, given the outbreak locations suggest there has been limited spread in France and as weather conditions and reducing temperatures reduces midge activity.
2. Infected and viraemic animals consigned from an affected area not under restriction. Currently considered very low risk, and mitigated by checks made at the premises of destination.
3. Use of germplasm. Currently considered negligible risk, given the origin of consignments (outside restricted areas) and the measures in place at the approved semen collection centres.

There is still some uncertainty around the source of disease although we now have better information about the distribution in France. Interestingly, in 2012/2013 of eight sites where wild ruminants were surveyed, 5% of the animals were seropositive for BTV but all PCR negative. Therefore it is possible the disease may have been circulating at a very low level

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in wildlife and it is only this year, when vector numbers reached a high level and herd immunity dropped below a threshold, that disease was able to circulate in livestock again.

We will continue to report any further updates.

Authors

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References

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