

Urgent advice 16-2018 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on the risk of spreading of the African Swine Fever virus in the Belgian wildlife and of spill-over in the Belgian swine sector

Terms of reference

Following introduction of African Swine Fever virus (ASFv) in wildlife (wild boars) in the province of Luxembourg (Belgium) the Scientific Committee has been asked to give rapid advice

- on the risk of geographic spreading of ASFv in wildlife (wild boars);
- on the risk of introduction and spread of ASFv in Belgian pig farms;
- and to assess the efficiency of measures that have been taken to prevent the risk of spreading of ASFv in wildlife and the risk of introduction and spread to pig farms.

Methods

This risk assessment is based on existing Belgian and European legislation, recent EFSA opinions regarding the African Swine Fever (ASF) situation in East-European countries, expert opinions and data available in the scientific literature.

Results and conclusions

The Scientific Committee estimates that the risk of further spreading of ASFv in wildlife (wild boars) is very high, even with the control measures currently in force.

The risk of introduction into domestic pigs is more limited and is estimated as being low, except for outdoor pig farms in contaminated areas or in regions with high densities of wild boars or for pig farms with a low biosecurity level.

The risk of dissemination between pig farms is estimated as being low.

The Scientific Committee is of the opinion that the measures currently in force to control the spread of ASFv in wildlife and to prevent the introduction and the spread of ASFv in Belgian pig farms are appropriate.

Recommendation

Regarding the wild fauna, the Scientific Committee recommends preventive and control measures aimed at intensifying passive surveillance (active search for wild boar cadavers), isolation of the currently infected population, significant reduction of wild boar populations in Belgium, to maintain or improve the biosecurity and to develop modeling tools for simulation of the spreading of the virus in wild boars.

Regarding the swine sector, the Scientific Committee highlights the need to regularly monitor the biosecurity level in farms in order to maintain or improve it where necessary. It is also recommended to develop a risk-based surveillance of high-risk farms and to confine pigs at outdoor farms located in contaminated areas or in areas with high wild boar densities.

Finally, recommendations are also provided for research and with regards to uncertainties, especially regarding the eventual role of insects as mechanical vectors and feed produced in contaminated areas.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french.