



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND CONSUMERS DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

04 - Veterinary control programmes

SANCO/10409/2010

**REPORT ON THE
2nd TASK FORCE MEETING
OF THE
“CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER”
SUB-GROUP
BUCHAREST, ROMANIA
10-11 November 2009**

PARTICIPANTS:

- Dr. Volker Moennig(DE – Chairman)
- Task force sub-group members: Dr. Pencho Kamenov, (BG), Dr. Niculae Lazar (RO), Dr. Miroslav Mojzis (SK), Dr.Deim Zoltán (HU)

- Dr. Tsvetko Alexandrov (BG)
- Dr Olga Zorko DG SANCO
- Dr. James Moynagh DG SANCO
- Dr. Klaus Depner DG SANCO

APOLOGIES.

Dr. Jedrt Maurer Wernig (SI)

Dr. Willie Loeffen (The NL)

Dr. Sandra Blome (DE)

LOCATION: Minerva Hotel, Bucharest**Objectives for the visit of the EU-Task Force CSF:**

- Assessment of the CSF situation in Romania, in particular the vaccination exit strategy
- Recommendations for future actions

10 November 2009

Meeting of the EU Task Force subgroup for CSF,

09:00 Approval of the Agenda

09:10 Approval of the minutes of the last meeting

09:20 Briefing of the Task force subgroup by the Romanian member on the group:

- Organisation of Veterinary services in Romania – CSF network
 1. Chain of command
 2. Communication between different levels
 3. Local and central documentation of eradication measures
- Current epidemiological situation – 2009
- Envisaged future control measures,(sampling strategies, early detection of the disease, simulation exercises....) after ceasing the vaccination in
 1. Big- industrial farms
 2. Backyard holdings
 3. Wild boar population
- Trainings and awareness regarding CSF of:
 1. Competent authorities
 2. Farmers
 3. Hunters

10:50 Coffee break

11:15 Laboratories

1. Laboratory contingency plans
2. Capacities
3. Communication
4. Quality management
5. Differential diagnosis and exclusion diagnosis (e.g. ASF), costs

12:30 Lunch break

13:30 Discussion on the situation and possible scenarios for solution

15:00 coffee break

15:30 Preliminary conclusions of the situation in Romania from Task Force subgroup

16:15 Preliminary recommendations of the Task Force subgroup

16:45 Preparation and suggestions for the upcoming plenary meeting

17:00 AOB

1. Approval of the Agenda:

At the beginning of the meeting it was made clear that the stop of vaccination by the end of 2009 will be a big challenge for Romania's pig production and the veterinary authorities. At the first Task Force meeting it was decided to help Romania in preparing an exit scenario for the post vaccination time. The two days meeting in Bucharest was organised together with Taiex. The first day was dedicated to a brainstorming with government authorities to assess the present situation and to find the best possible solutions for the future. For the second day a plenary meeting was organised with representatives of regional veterinary authorities from all counties of Romania as well as the representatives of national hunting and pork producer organisations. The conclusions of the first day will be presented to the broader audience.

Dr. Depner proposed that the Bulgarian colleagues should give a presentation on CSF situation in wild boar since several cases were diagnosed close to the border with Romania – on the other side of Danube.

The agenda with the additional presentation was adopted.

2. The minutes of the first meeting were approved.

3. Briefing of the Task force subgroup

Dr. Lazar opened the briefing. He stated that from July 2008 no outbreaks have been notified. He explained the organisation of the Romanian Veterinary System with special emphasis on the chain of command, contingency planning, and the organisation of the National and the Regional Control Centres. Recently the responsibility for disease outbreaks has been transferred to the Ministry of the Interior, which is considered to be a major improvement. In addition some strategy changes were introduced: While in former years in case of a CSF positive backyard holding the pigs of the whole commune were killed, now the pigs of the positive holding are culled and the regular restriction zones (3 and 10 km) are established. A network of surveillance on pig diseases has been established that reports regularly on the number of controls performed (transports, markets, farm biosecurity etc.). Based on the National Contingency Plan an expert group was formed and in the framework of a twinning with Lithuania the competence in this field was strengthened. The expert group is in accordance with Directive 2001/89/EC (Art 23,5) which requests from Member States to have a permanent operational expert group to assist the competent authority in ensuring the disease preparedness and in case of an outbreak to assist in (a) epidemiological enquiries, (b) sampling testing and interpreting the results, and (c) establishment of disease control measures. Simulation exercises will be performed on all levels and in each district.

Pig holdings were formerly categorized in (a) backyard holdings with up to three pigs, (b) backyard holdings with more than three pigs and reproduction, and (c) commercial farms. Categories (a) and (b) were vaccinated with modified live vaccines whereas animals in category (c) were either vaccinated with inactivated marker vaccine or not vaccinated. This categorization has been abandoned and replaced by two new categories: (a) Private holdings with and without reproduction and trade (trading may only take place in the commune), (b) commercial holdings with mandatory biosecurity measures. At present there are about 294 commercial farms with 1,55 million pigs. There is an increase in commercial farms. The backyard pig population of about 3,5 million pigs is spread over 1,5 million holdings. The vaccination campaign covered about 96% of the backyard population. As biggest problem for the control of CSF the trade with live pigs is perceived. In contrast the trade with animal products is considered as minor risk factor. Romanian authorities are aware that education on CSF is important. Since 2007 videos and leaflets had been produced and are being distributed to the rural population. In order to facilitate procedures, compensation for CSF infected animals had been shifted from the level of the central

government to the local county level. In order to stimulate owners to notify the disease as early as possible, dead pigs are not compensated.

3. 1. The administrative structures for CSF control in Romania were presented by Dr. Maria MIHĂIȚĂ (see Figure 1):

- The national administrative structures for controlling the disease are defined by the Law no 1/2008, which modifies and completes the GO no. 42/2004 for organizing the Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority (NSVFSA), and enforced by the GO no. 1189 since Oct. 2009;
- National Disease Control Centre (NDCC), at central level, which is organized inside National Committee for Emergency Situations in accordance with the provisions of the art. 26 of the GO 42/2004 related to organizing of the sanitary veterinary and for food safety authority, approved with completion and modifying through Law no. 215/2004, with following completions and modifying, under the direct leadership of the Ministry of Interior and under coordination of the Prime Minister of Romania.
- There are 42 Local Disease Control Centers (LDCC), i.e. one for each prefecture.
- Partners in disease control are: The NSVFSA and its subordinate structures, the county sanitary veterinary directorates, General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations (IGSU) with all subordinated structures for intervention in emergency situations included, and other ministries which are part of the National Committee for Emergency Situations (NCES);
- The chain of command is well defined and lead by the Ministry of Interior.

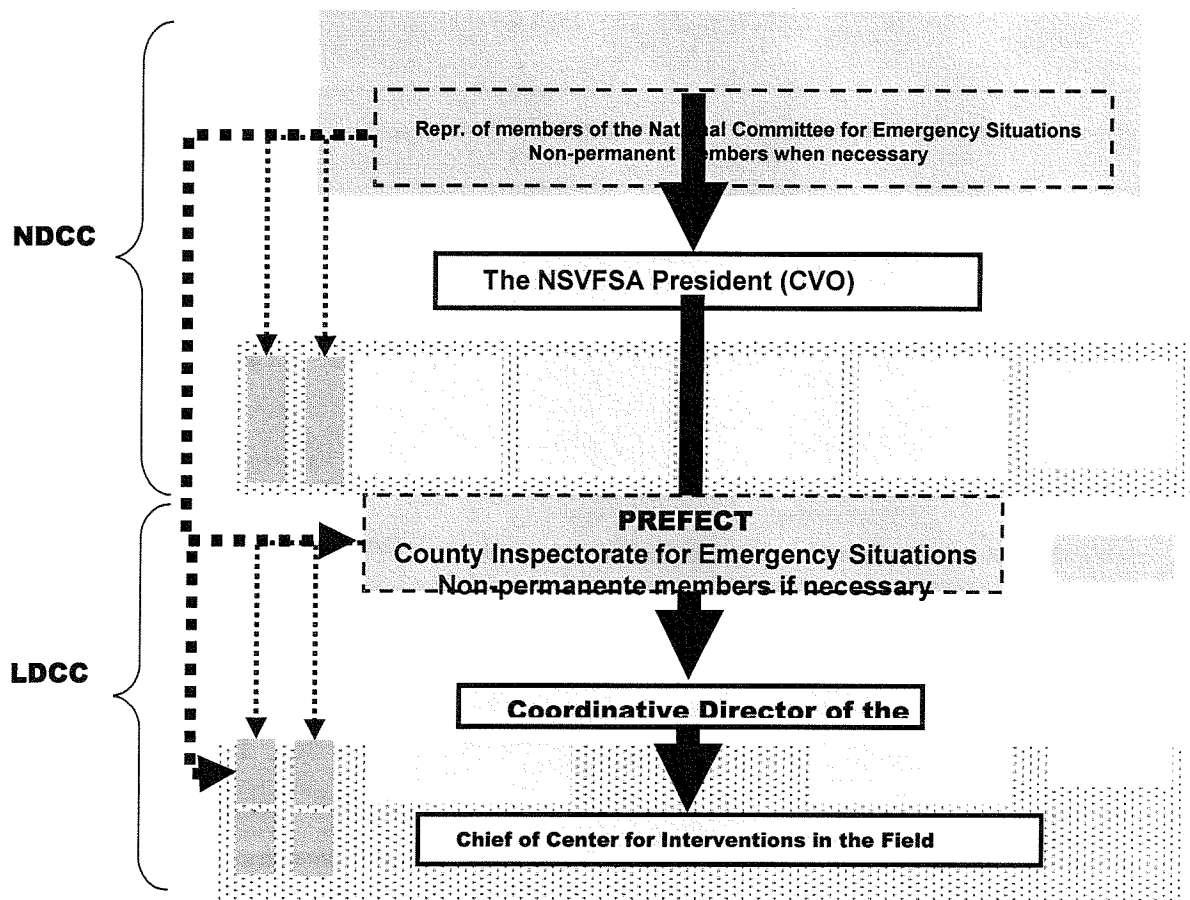


Figure 1. Chain of command in case of CSF outbreaks

- When disease is confirmed, the county SVFSD notifies the NSVFSA about the outbreak using a notification report document,.
- If only one disease outbreak is notified, and the outbreak is small, the intervention is ordered by the county prefect and organized at the level of LDCC;
- If there are multiple disease outbreaks or the outbreak is significant (e.g. in a large commercial holding) the CVO notifies the NCES in order to establish the intervention strategy. The NDCC meets, takes the decision for intervention and sends it to the respective LDCC.

3.2. The current epidemiological situation was presented by Dr. Marius Grigore

In Romania there are 294 Commercial Farms with 1,550,000 pigs and approx 1,500,000 non-professional holdings (backyard) with 3,550,000 pigs. At present the epidemiological situation is favorable, the last outbreak of CSF in domestic pigs was recorded in 2007

Table 1: CSF OUTBREAKS 2007

	Non-professional holdings	Commercial holdings
Outbreaks in domestic pigs	165	3
Dead pigs due to CSF	507	11030
Destroyed pigs due to CSF	4002	42659
Total number of affected pigs	4509	53689
Affected villages	95	2
Affected counties	19	1

The vaccination campaign in backyard holdings is ongoing until the end of the year 2009. A total of 4,098,478 pigs were vaccinated in 2009. In commercial holdings bio-safety measures are in place as requested by the law from the owner of the holding. Holdings are registered and the measures need to be approved by the local authorities at the time of registration of the holding. In high density zones there is a high epidemiological risk: Large numbers of backyard pigs are concentrated in the Northern part of the country in Satumare County and in the South near the Bulgarian border.

The state-owned forest is under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition there are fenced private areas. The number of wild boar is relatively low, according to the information provided 57,000 (i.e. an average of <2 animals/km²) in 2,160 hunting areas. However, the density of wild boar populations varies, with the district of Arat having the highest one. The hunting bag seems to be stable with about 16,000 adult animals and 3,000 piglets shot annually. All shot wild boar are tested for trichinella, CSF and African swine fever. One case of CSF in wild boar was confirmed (RT-PCR) in the Danube Delta in 2009. A total of 252,236 baits were distributed for oral vaccination and 6,862 baits were recovered afterwards (not consumed). In areas with higher density two baits per animal were distributed. Experience shows that bait uptake in August was poor. The vaccination campaign was nationwide; however the execution of the measures was decentralized. The decentralized purchase of the baits presented some difficulties; as a result two different vaccines are being used in the country. In case of CSF outbreaks in wild boar the prefect of the county informs all parties concerned. State veterinarians can ask hunters for samples from killed wild boar. Dead wild boars are rarely found under natural conditions.

3.3. Laboratory contingency plans in the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) – presented by Dr Daniel Donecsu

Contingency plans were prepared in order to ensure large capacities and a high quality of performance in times of crisis. Dr. Donecsu presented the Romanian system of diagnostic laboratories and the sampling strategy for 2010. The total laboratory capacity of the country

was very accurately assessed and a laboratory contingency plan had been developed by the NRL. Most laboratories are accredited or are in the process of accreditation. Interlaboratory comparison tests are performed annually. County laboratories are the first line of defence, i.e. samples are sent to them first. Of 41 county laboratories nine are able to perform RT-PCR (250 samples per day), all of them are able to perform immuno-peroxidase tests, immunofluorescence tests (50-100 samples) and ELISA (500 samples). This capacity can be expanded in a short time threefold in case of emergency. Sampling will take place in small backyard holdings and in backyards with more than 10 pigs. Each wild boar shot or found dead will be investigated. The serological surveillance for 2010 depends on the vaccination status of pigs. Only pigs that have not been vaccinated will be sampled. The diagnostic programme will be paid for by the state. Test results are communicated by email, fax or mail.

3.4. Animal identification

The Romanian system for animal identification was started in 2005. Each pig was identified using a unique number and data were fed to a national database. This system was modified in 2008 when identification was split in backyard and commercial farms. The latter now only need to mark animals with the code of the holding. Counties are distributing the numbers and veterinarians are marking animals. They are paid for each animal marked. Owners must notify animal movements to the authority and animal movements are registered.

11 NOVEMBER 2009, Plenary Meeting

09:00 Welcome (Romanian hosts, Commission)

09:15 Introduction (chairman)

09:30 CSF situation in Romania from the point of view of the central authorities-

10:00 CSF situation in Romania from the point of view of local authorities

11:00 Coffee break

11:30 Legal framework on regionalisation in EU (Dr. Depner, DG SANCO)

12:00 Discussion

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 Continuation of the discussion

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 Conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force subgroup on the situation regarding eradication and control of CSF in Romania after cessation the vaccination of domestic pigs

16:30 Discussion

17:00 End of the meeting

1. Dr Lazar described the CSF situation in Romania before accession. There was a large number of outbreaks and CSF was considered to be endemic in the backyard pig population. The situation has greatly improved with no outbreaks in the last years. This could be attributed to the emergency vaccination measures taken. By the end of November 2009 there will be a detailed documentation available on the vaccination of the backyard pig population.

2. Reports from the Counties

Several district veterinarians described the situation in their districts: Bihor County is located in the North West of Romania and has approximately 160,000 pigs in small holdings. The number of pigs in non professional holdings may vary according to the crops (and feed) situation. The county had gathered early experiences with cessation of vaccination, since it was one of the first stopping vaccination in 2002. Nine months later a large number of outbreaks occurred and the epidemic lasted until 2007. The experience gathered in this county is characteristic for the situation of the whole country: There were no problems in the commercial farm sector but only in backyard holdings. In 2005/2006 the county authorities started to enforce movement restrictions and they succeeded in improving the epidemiological situation. It was recognized that monitoring and control of the infection is particularly difficult in small holdings. The situation was complicated in holdings near forests because of occasional communications of domestic pigs with wild boar. The authorities had to struggle with the enforcement of movement controls and the trade with piglets across the country.

Dr Dmitrov from the Arad County on border with Hungary stated that CSF control is intimately connected with movements of pigs. Movements of pigs should be restricted and sold pigs should be identified by ear-tags and their movements reported. Out of 40,000 holdings in the county 10,000 are selling piglets. The county veterinarian complained about the incomplete and random vaccination of wild boar due to the problems with the complicated purchase of vaccines. Serological samples are collected, but many carcasses are kept directly by the hunters and are not submitted to official collection centres. Therefore it is very difficult to keep track of CSF in wild boar. In this county there is the largest number of wild boar (3,400 wild boars in 74 hunting areas).

Cluj County has 56 hunting grounds. Since forest areas do not provide enough food, wild boar often travel long distances to find food in crop fields (up to 30 km). This makes oral vaccination difficult. It was stressed that good co-operation with hunters with respect to the control of CSF is necessary. There are an estimated 2400 wild boar in Cluj. The Riems vaccine is used, and a seroconversion of only 20% was recorded. Vaccination is discontinued.

In Mures County there are no particular problems, because most backyard farms buy piglets for fattening and slaughter for Christmas.

The official veterinarian of Timis County stressed the issue of movement of pigs, their products and other animal products. Domestic pigs are traded in a free market economy which is basically not under sufficient veterinary control so far.

There was agreement that efforts from all relevant authorities in Romania - not only veterinary authorities – are needed for the fight against CSF. Some district veterinarians felt, that the number of non commercial pig farms should be reduced. However, it was made clear by the chairman, that this is a far reaching political issue beyond the scope of this meeting. Instead one should focus control efforts on the non-commercial breeders.

When discussing the future situation, i.e. after January 1st 2010, there was general agreement, that movement of pigs (and pig products) represents a major challenge, because of the veterinary control issues mentioned above. After 1 January 2010 the system needs some improvements, taking into consideration differences between and specifics of counties. One proposal was the establishment of an administrative person responsible for CSF, whose job is to manage all administrative tasks in connection to CSF; this would improve the efficiency of the official veterinarian by giving him more time and capacities for his field work. Another proposal was a risk-based subdivision of backyard farms in order to facilitate monitoring and the detection of new outbreaks of CSF as early as possible. At the moment >80% of holdings are in the (a) category, but there are great differences among holdings concerning the risk of spreading the disease. Another issue is to legalize business of small pig farmers especially breeders who comply with regulations. This point was strongly emphasized by the breeders association.

3. Dr.Tsviatko Alexandrov presented the situation in Bulgaria

- In 2005 Bulgaria registered 88 cases of CSF. Oral vaccination of wild boar was started and vaccination of domestic pigs was finished;
- In 2007 there were 3 outbreaks (one outbreak in a commercial farm without bio-security measures and two outbreaks in East-Balkan pig herds)
- In 2008 there was one outbreak close to the Serbian border in a family farm type B with low bio-security level
- In 2009 the vaccination area was changed: to the border with Serbia, FYROM and Romania.
- From September until November 2009 there were six cases of wild boar found positive in Tutrakan, near the Danube – on the other side of Danube is Calarasi County in Romania. All cases were young animals; the strain isolated belongs to genotype 2.3 and is not identical with previous Bulgarian outbreaks. It is unclear where the virus came from; three possibilities were discussed:
 1. from an infected area in Bulgaria or Romania
 2. virus was present previously but not detected (however, wild boar were tested with negative results)
 3. virus was introduced by humans, the most likely scenario since an illegal landfill was detected in the area.

Because of the situation a new control strategy was adopted:

- **Increased surveillance in domestic pigs and wild boar;**
 - clinical examination of all pig holdings based on the established check list
 - serological investigations in domestic pigs (backyard holdings!!!)
 - sampling of every shot or found dead wild boar
 - keeping shot wild boar in game collection centre until negative laboratory results are available
- **Decreasing the wild boar population**
 - Trapping in the hot spot area and
 - Intensive hunting
- **Vaccination campaigns**
 - Vaccination on islands in the Danube – (October)
 - Vaccination campaign in the surrounding of the hot spot area (November)
 - Vaccination campaign in the hot spot area after intensive hunting/trapping in December

The control programme was amended several times after 2007.

Five categories of farms were generated:

- Industrial pig farms with good biosecurity
- Family farms type A with good biosecurity
- Family farms type B with no or low level biosecurity
- Backyard farms with up to five pigs for home consumption and no license for trading
- Semi wild pigs (East Balkan pigs)

4. At the end of the meeting Dr. Klaus Depner presented the legal framework for regionalisation of the country.

There was agreement among all attendants of the meeting that 2010 will be a crucial year for the epidemiological situation in Romania. Vaccination will be banned by the 31st of December 2009 and all stakeholders must be on alert in order to identify and notify possible new outbreaks of CSF as soon as possible in order to prevent a further spread of the infection.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusion

The old categorisation of pigs (a. backyard holdings with a maximum of 3 pigs without reproduction, b. backyard pigs with reproduction, c. commercial farms) has been abandoned and has been replaced by a new categorisation which is based on vaccination policy:

- A) Pigs which are vaccinated: backyard pigs which are not allowed to be slaughtered in abattoirs; trade is only allowed within the commune of origin.
- B) Pigs which are not vaccinated, i.e. pigs from large commercial holdings with mandatory biosecurity. These animals have access to slaughterhouses and the national market.

Recommendation

Since vaccination stops at the end of the year, categorizing pigs based on vaccination will not function any more. – It is recommended **to extend the categorisation of holdings on the basis of risk and biosecurity criteria.**

2. Conclusion

A CSF network has been established and an expert group exists.

Recommendation

The expert group should meet regularly also in peace time and simulation exercises have to be performed. **Expert group is encouraged to take the lead in the simulation exercises** (and planning of the programme).

3. Conclusion

Change of responsibility to the ministry of interior is considered to be a good decision for the handling of future CSF outbreaks.

4. Conclusion

The vaccination campaign in wild boar has not been performed in the whole country; however the risk zones were identified – a “cordon sanitaire” along the borders with Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and Bulgaria was established and vaccination will be continued in these areas as long as necessary. If necessary, vaccination will be performed in particular areas inside the country.

Recommendation

The number of wild boar should be reassessed and the EU wild boar database which will become operable from CRL shall be implemented: The training for hunters to perform the vaccination and sampling should take place. **Expert group should take the initiative for this task.**

Recommendation

Measures shall be taken to ensure that 100% of wild boar shot or found dead are subject of testing. Carcasses should only be released for human consumption after test results have been obtained.

5. Conclusion

Biosecurity measures in commercial farms are considered appropriate; however no biosecurity guidelines for smaller farms and backyard holdings exist.

Recommendation

Appropriate biosecurity rules should be created and implemented for small commercial farms (a new category of “microfarms” should be introduced).

6. Conclusion

Sampling strategy and lab contingency plans for the laboratory seem appropriate for the non vaccination time in 2010.

Recommendation

In order to reduce costs and increase throughput the NRL is encouraged to establish the method of pooling of samples for RT –PCR. However, it must be ensured that sensitivity is still sufficient.

7. Conclusion

Results from seroprevalence studies in wild boar are extremely variable. The reason for this variability is not known.

Recommendation

The expert group should evaluate the results of the vaccination campaign from two angles: (a) quality of vaccine and (b) vaccination strategy

8. Conclusion

The animal identification system has been changed lately and still seems to be very complicated.

Recommendation

The animal identification should be continued in all farm categories and the system should be modified in order to take the creation of new categories into account.

General Recommendations:

- In order to more effectively control CSF in wild boar trans boundary co-operation should be improved.
- Inspection visits by vets in swine holdings should be based on clinical examinations and check lists comparable to those used in Bulgaria should be introduced. Experience shows that this is a very valuable tool.
- In cases of febrile disease of unknown etiology samples should be taken to exclude the presence of CSF (and ASF).
- The control strategy for CSF in wild boar should be co-ordinated on a national basis.