



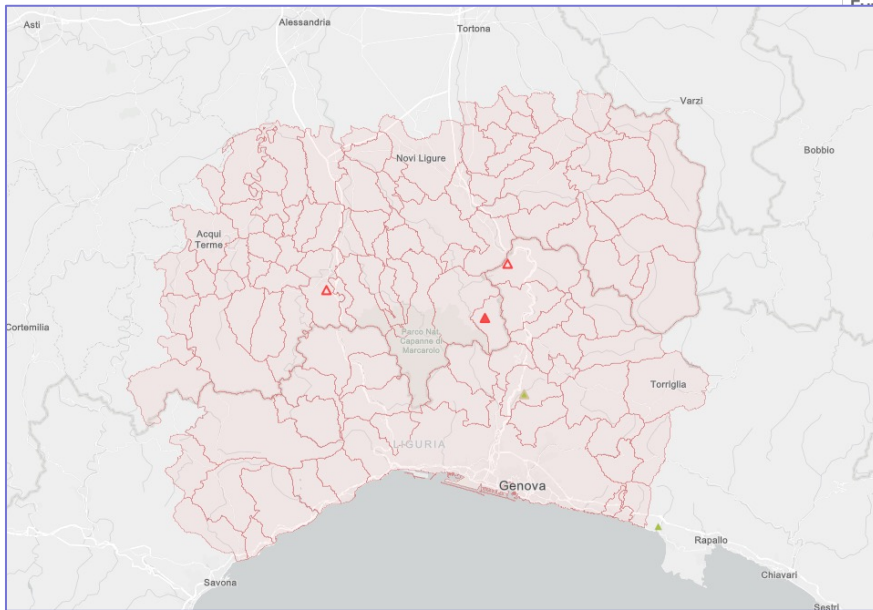
ASF mission of the EU Veterinary Emergency Team (EUVET) to Italy (Piedmont and Liguria)

(7-11 February 2022)



The TORs (as usual) and the TEAM

- The experts should provide scientific, technical, managerial and practical assistance on the spot on the refinement of the most suitable control and eradication measures for African swine fever (ASF) under local conditions, especially as regards preparedness, surveillance and coordination efforts.
- The experts should report exclusively to the Commission services and the authorities of Italy. Continuous contact should be guaranteed between the team, the Commission services and authorities of Italy.
- The experts should provide a written report with conclusions and recommendations aimed to the competent authority. A report to the Commission and the Member States in the framework of the Standing Committee on Plant, Animal, Food and Feed should be delivered.
- The experts shall operate under the provisions laid down in Commission Decision 2007/142/EC and in particular based on the standard rules of procedure for groups of experts.
- **Team:** Sandra Blome (FLI); Vidmantas Paulauskas (VMVT); Petr Satran (SVA); Vittorio Guberti (ISPRA)



On 29 December a wild boar carcass was detected in the municipality of Ovada (AL) on 5 January ASF was diagnosed and confirmed on 6 January 2022.

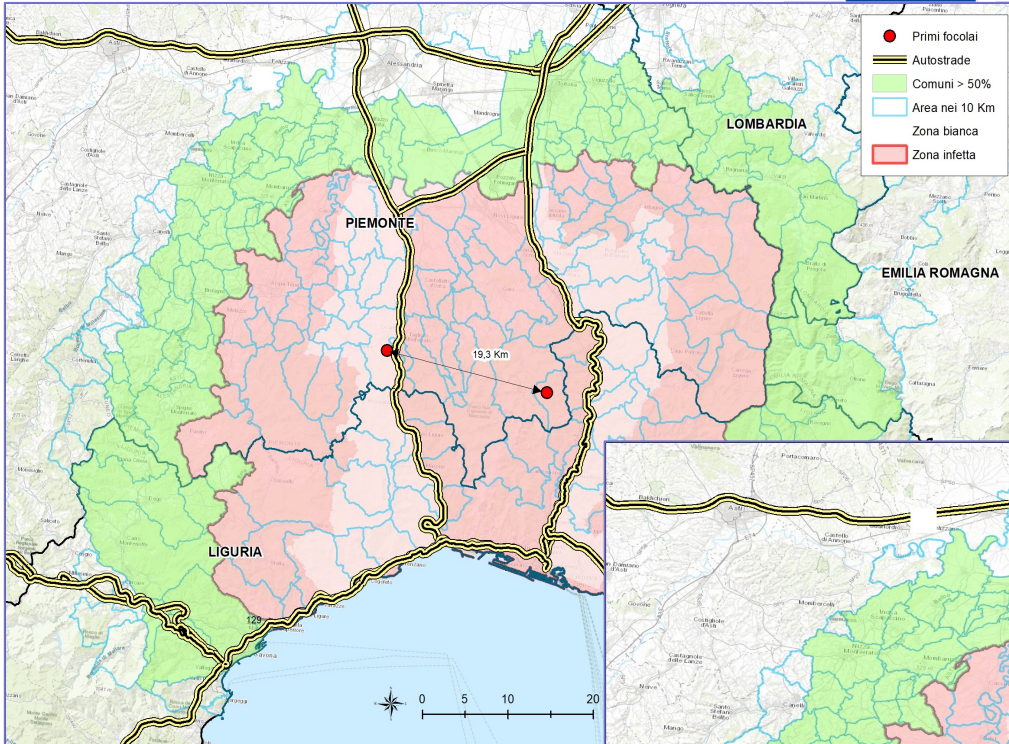
infected area of **2811 km²** were defined.

On 13 January, a Ministerial Decree listed the **measures to be implemented immediately;**

On 14 January **hunting activities** were rescheduled according to the epidemiological situation also in the neighbouring free areas.

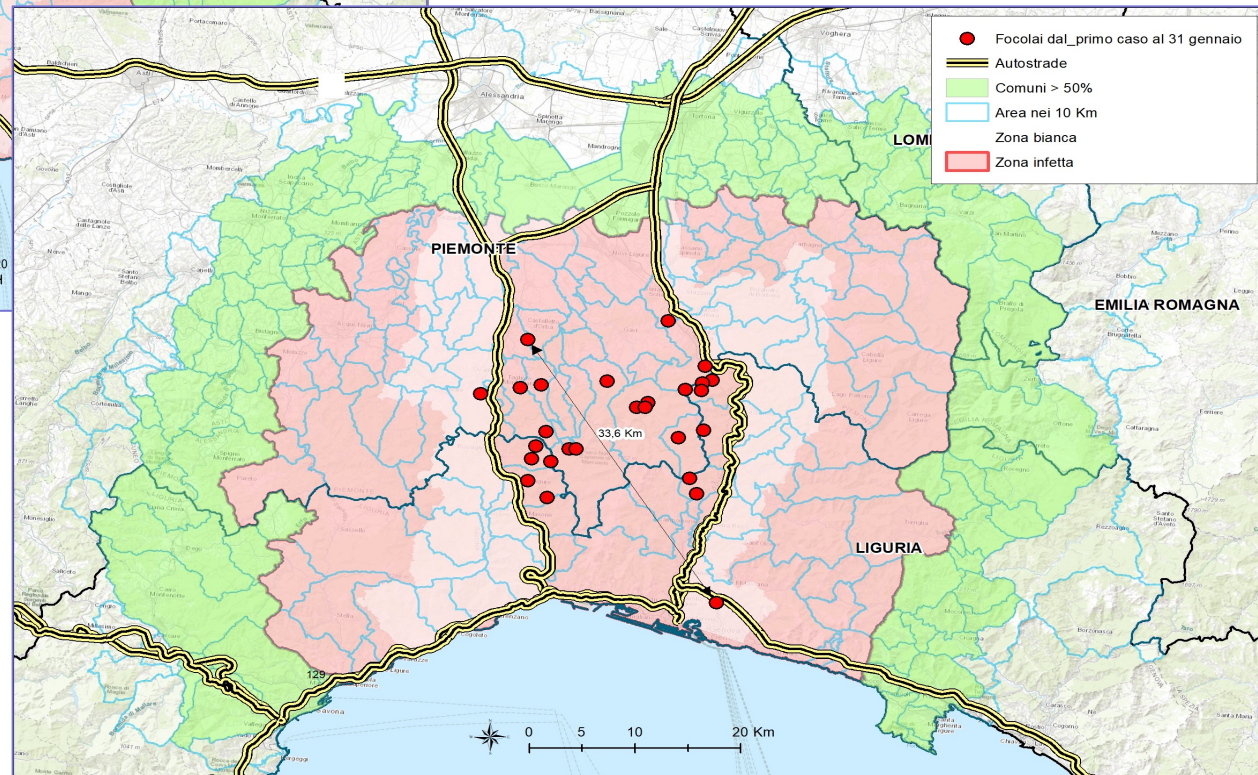
The ASF genotype II has been detected in a Mediterranean mountain area;

- *The first two cases detected were more than 19 km apart (see figure below);*
- *The virus has been introduced several weeks earlier;*



9 January

5 February



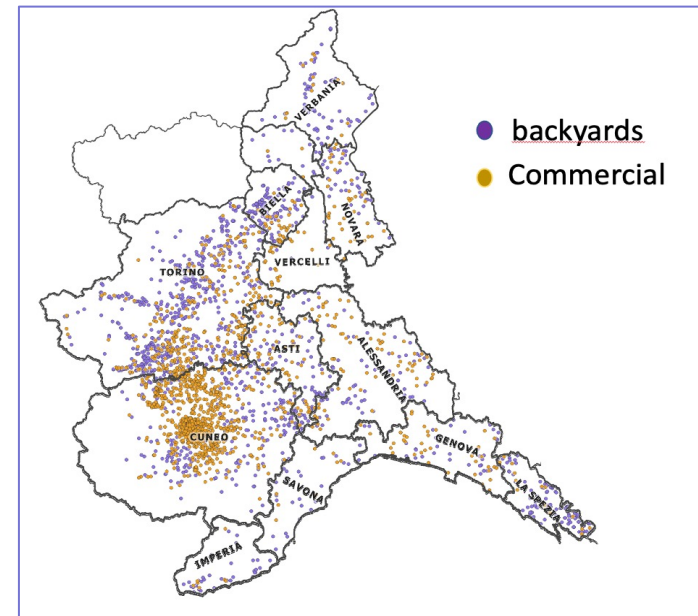
The domestic pig population in the area is relatively small (less than 10000 pigs) with **238 farms**, most of which are non-commercial.

For non-commercial farms, the ministerial decree imposed the slaughtering of all pigs while re-stocking was prohibited; for commercial farms, programmed slaughtering is still under discussion. In any case, the slaughter of the animals encountered some difficulties because the slaughterhouses in the Piedmont region were reluctant to slaughter animals from the infected area. An attempt to manage the situation was under way.

Early detection in domestic pigs is based on **passive surveillance**;

In the infected area every sick or dead pig weighing more than 20 kg must be tested for ASF.

Scheduled slaughtering of most animals on non-commercial farms reduced the number of possible suspected cases to date (5 dead pigs plus 21 sick animals, all of which tested negative for ASF).

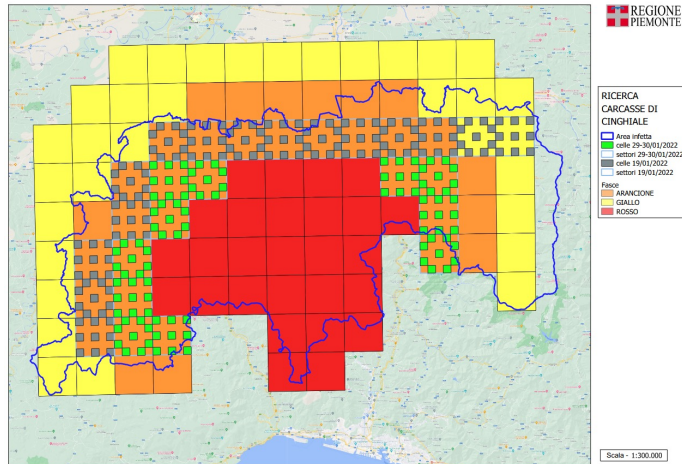


Wild boar

The local wild boar population is at a very high density (**more than 10 animals/km²**); considering that the entire infected area is about 2800 km² it means that the population directly at risk of being infected with ASF ranges from **14.000** animals (expected post-hunting and pre-reproductive size) to **28.000** animals (expected post-reproductive and pre-hunting size); hunting bags reflect this high density. Most of the hunting bag (>90%) is reached through driven collective hunts that take place during three months (November to January) while single hunts take place over a longer period of time depending on the region; in several areas wild boar abundance is reduced through a specific plan aimed at reducing agricultural damages.

Passive surveillance

In Piedmont, the area was divided into sub-areas of 25 km² and each subdivided into 1 km² plots; 9 plots in each sub-area were thoroughly searched; the search was then carried out in neighbouring plots, rotating until the entire sub-area was searched. In the worst-case scenario at least 36% of the entire wild boar habitat was thoroughly searched. In Liguria, hunters were asked to search in their usual hunting areas.

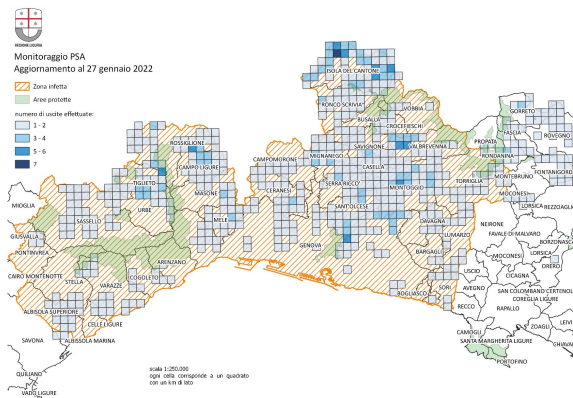


A total of **205** carcasses were found between **7 January and 5 March**, of which 29 (14%) tested positive for ASF virus.

The core area (ASF-positive carcasses has a size of about 450 km²) with a total of **2250** wild boar;

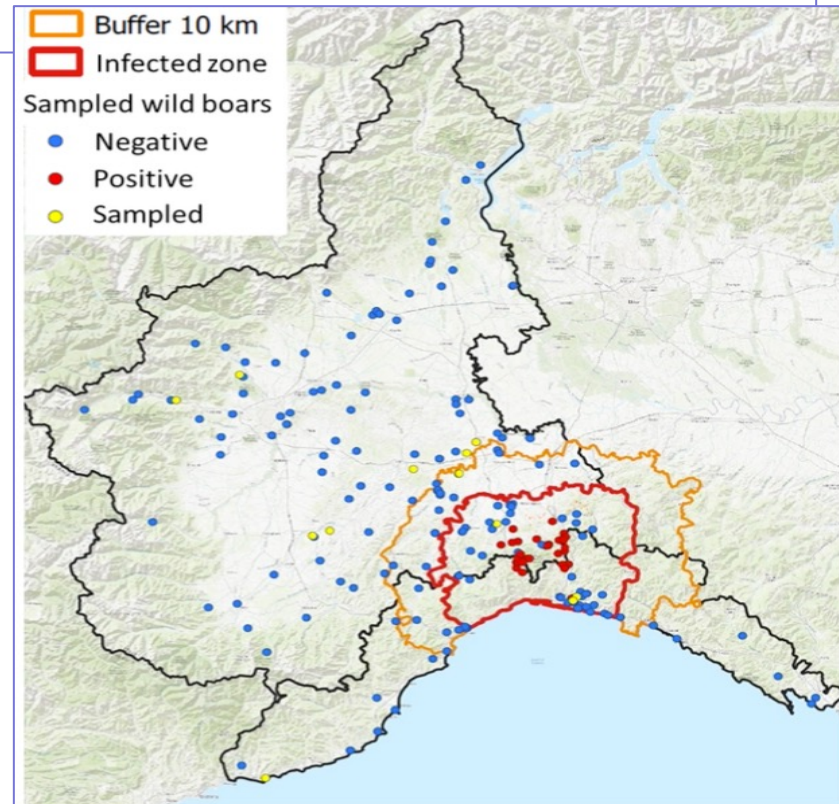
29 carcasses are less than expected;

Steep mountains and thick forests: difficult to search for carcasses



Active searches for carcasses were also carried out in **Lombardy and Emilia Romagna** as both regions border the infected area. Several carcasses were found, **11 of which were suitable for virus detection and all of which were negative.** In Piedmont (Alessandria province) carcasses are stored in dedicated storage points and then safely disposed of at a rendering plant; in Liguria carcasses are disposed of by a private firm under the supervision of the Veterinary Service.

The active search of carcasses confirmed the size and the shape of area initially defined as infected.



Recommendations

*African swine fever **eradication plan** that must target the entire infected wild boar population and neighbouring populations regardless of the administrative entities involved;*

***Data** on the spread of infection and any other information describing the epidemiological evolution of African swine fever must **refer to the entire infected area**;*

*This approach requires routine **data sharing** and close collaboration among the different administrations involved;*

To apply the fence strategy

As quickly as possible

- Placement of signs: specific signs should warn the population of the risks associated with the presence of the virus;*
- Reinforce motorway fences (both A26 and A7) also in view of the fact that a positive animal was run over at the entrance to the motorway (Genova est tollgate);*
- As soon as possible (by the end of June 2022) build two additional fences, one to the east of the A7 and the other to the west of the A26 (see figures below) in order to create two white zones similar to the one envisaged by the Italian Wild Boar Operational Manual;*

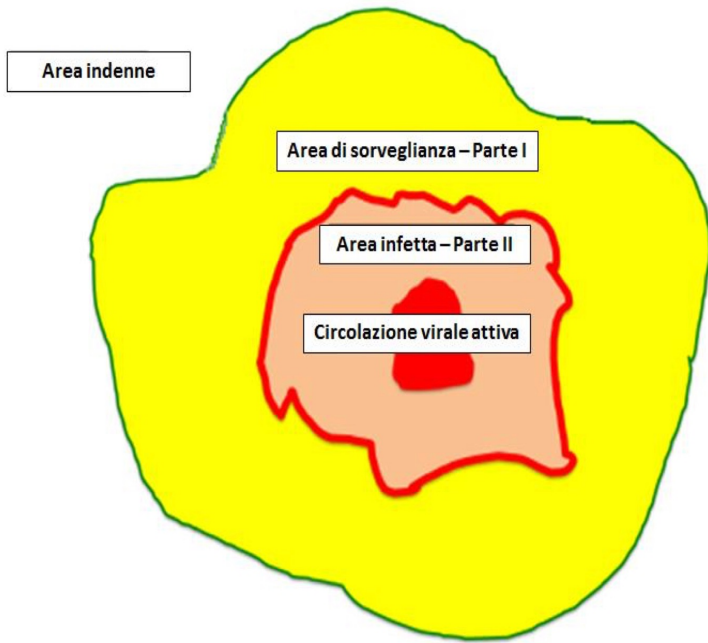
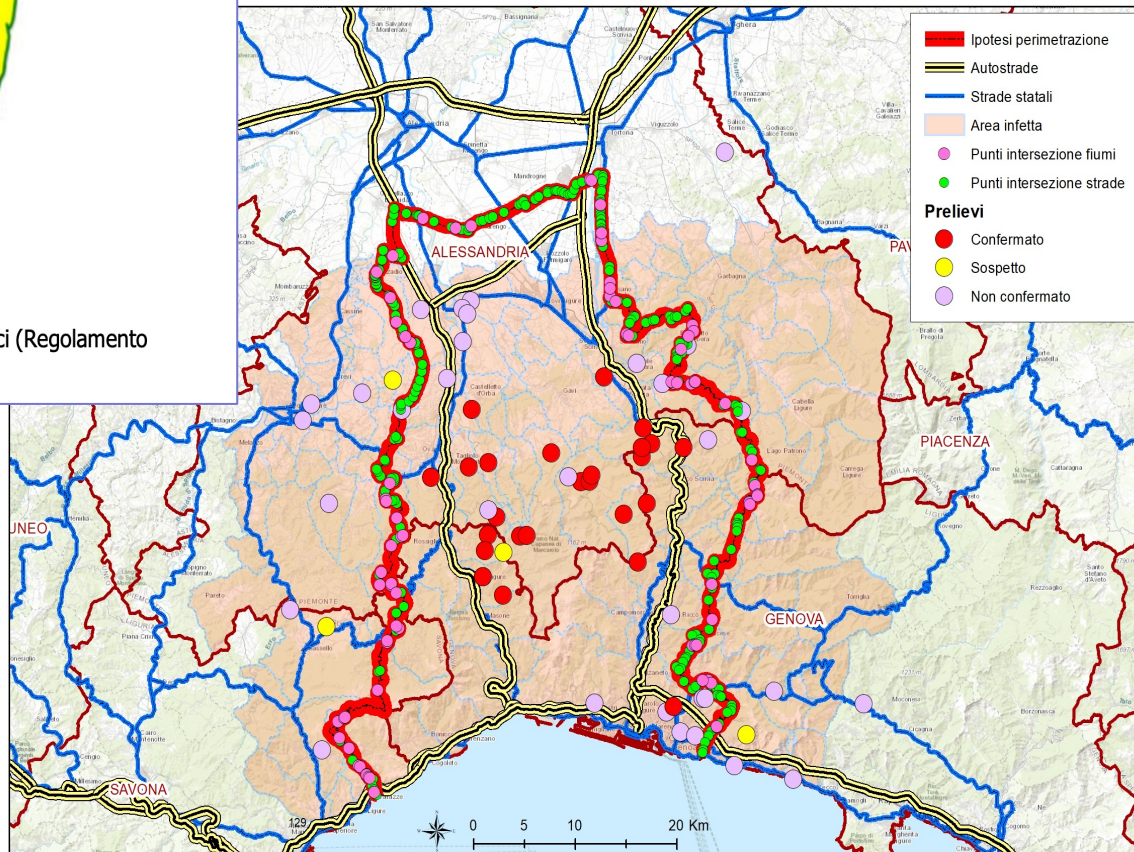


Fig. 5: Schema di divisione interna della zona infetta da PSA nei suini selvatici (Regolamento Delegato 2020/687 e Regolamento di esecuzione (UE) 2021/605)





While building/reinforcing fences

- *Construct and set traps in the infected area*
- *Implement passive surveillance by targeting specific locations*
- *Develop a specific plan for wild boar reduction in the PART I;*
- *The **actions** envisaged in the strategy should also be **fine-tuned** using epidemiological models that take into account both the **high density of the host population and the influence of temperatures on the survival of the virus.***

Once the fences have been completed

- Consideration of **abolishing certain restriction measures** (e.g. cycling and hiking allowed on authorised trails, etc.).

- Coordinated depopulation efforts:

Wild boars in the **white area** are to be **nearly extinguished** through trapping and culling;

Verify that - in the **fenced core area**- the lethality induced by the virus together with trapping and culling **bring the virus to eradication**;

In PART I hunting is allowed but accompanied by strict biosecurity measures including testing all animals;

Domestic pigs

- *Increase passive surveillance; possibly all dead animals should be tested for ASF (so also <20kg);*
- *Increase the level of biosecurity;*
- *When not possible consider slaughter/killing and further compensation to avoid restocking/repopulation*
- *Training pig owners and keepers on biosecurity measures;*
- *Training of veterinarians on ASF*

Pet pigs

- *Check/reinforce register;*
- *Regular visits to check presence, biosecurity management and health status;*



Thank you for your attention!

The working atmosphere during the whole mission was very good.

The colleagues from Italy gave all their support and assistance to facilitate a fruitful mission.

The EUVET rapporteurs wish to thank all colleagues for their support and help given during the whole remote mission.