

Rapid advice 08-2014 of the Scientific Committee of the FASFC on the risks of introduction of African Swine Fever in Belgium.

Recently, African swine fever (ASF) was introduced in the EU (Lithuania and Poland). Given these circumstances, the Scientific Committee was asked to give a rapid advice on the possible introduction of ASF in Belgium. More specifically, it was asked to identify the risks for the introduction of the ASF virus and to investigate the need for additional measures in order to prevent the introduction of the virus in Belgium and to detect a potential introduction at an early stage.

The Scientific Committee has listed all possible ways of introduction of ASF and has assigned them a score according to their risk for the introduction of ASF in Belgium. This analysis shows that the risk for introduction of ASF in Belgium is as yet low, but not non-existent. As a general rule it can be said that blood and all products that contain blood (e.g. meat) are the main source of infection and therefore the highest risk for introduction.

According to the Scientific Committee, the main risks lie in economic migration from Eastern Europe and hunting tourism followed by general tourism and intra-Community trade of Suids and derived raw or frozen products originating from infected regions.

The Scientific Committee recommends to organize a general information and education campaign to all actors in the pig production chain, the hunters and the general public to remind them again of the risk of importing and feeding products of Suids and to stimulate the declaration of suspected cases by pig owners and veterinarians. As another recommendation, a syndromic surveillance could be installed meaning that pig farms showing an increased mortality or suspected symptoms should prove to be free from ASF (exclusion instead of suspicion). Furthermore, this situation could represent an opportunity to gather a minimum amount of data concerning the biosecurity of pig farms, including at least the access to an outdoor pen, should be gathered in order to assess the risk of introduction for an individual farm. The Scientific Committee also recommends to include ASF in the already existing passive surveillance for classical swine fever in wild boars and to bring the intestines of shot wild boars to game-handling establishments or to let them be collected by the competent rendering plants. Finally, it is recommended to increase the vigilance at the border inspection posts for legal and illegal import of Suids and derived products, and to check the disinfection of vehicles and to organize a simulation exercise in order to be prepared for an potential epidemic of ASF in Belgium.

The full text is available on this website in dutch and in french, respectively under the section "Wetenschappelijk Comité/Adviezen" and "Comité scientifique/Avis".