

## News from Europe

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The **EWDA Bulletin** is now available, the first edition is in colour. Email copies are obtainable from Marc Artois - [m.artois@vet-lyon.fr](mailto:m.artois@vet-lyon.fr).

**MedVetNet, Special Interest Group on WiREDZ (wildlife related emerging disease and zoonoses).** First meeting Madrid 11-12<sup>th</sup> December 2007. Anyone investigating these diseases in wildlife anywhere in Europe please Email Paul Duff- [p.duff@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:p.duff@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk) .

**8th Conference of the European Wildlife Disease Association, Rovinj, Croatia, October 2-5, 2008.**

The European Wildlife Disease Association (EWDA) will hold its biennial conference on the Adriatic coast, in Rovinj, Croatia. From the Pannonian lowlands in the east; divided by the Dinaric mountain range where wildlife abounds; extending to the sapphire colored coast of the Adriatic Sea with an indented coastline and thousands of islands, and reefs; you will find as much as ten percent of the country's land area is protected as natural heritage territory, with eight national parks, and no less than almost eight hundred animal species under protection. Despite its modest size, in terms of its biodiversity Croatia ranks among the top five countries in Europe, with some of its localities being of global importance. As we invite you to Croatia, we want you to share with us the taste, the feeling, and the spirit of "The Mediterranean as It Once Was". More information on the conference can be found in the Meeting and Conference Announcements section of this supplement.

## Serosurvey of wild ruminants for anti-bluetongue virus antibodies in Spain

The background of our study was that bluetongue virus (BTV) serotype 4 entered the Iberian Peninsula in October 2004 and spread through south-western Spain until 2005. Several outbreaks affecting cattle, sheep and goats were reported in 2004 and 2005. Hence, we aimed to search for anti-BTV antibodies in wild ruminant sera from the affected area and surroundings, also considering the distribution of *Culicoides imicola* in Spain. We also aimed to look for the geographical and temporal patterns of BTV within wild ruminant populations in the study area.

We tested 2233 red deer, 106 fallow deer, 72 mouflon, 44 roe deer and 10 Barbary sheep sera for anti-BTV antibodies by means of a competitive ELISA test. We found all these species to have been in contact with the virus. None of the animals sampled in 03/04 or 04/05 had antibodies, while for the last two years of the study (05/06 and 06/07) we found that 35% of fallow deer, 22% of red deer, 13% of mouflon and 5% of roe deer to have antibodies against BTV.

Also 25% of Barbary sheep tested (only 4 for 05/06 and 06/07) had antibodies.

We analysed the geographic and temporal patterns of BTV in red deer in the study area and found higher seroprevalence rates in southern than in northern geographical areas, following a similar pattern to that observed in livestock. We also found an increasing seroprevalence through the study years following the first detection of antibodies in 05/06.

Later, in summer 2007, some 100 blood samples from a deer farm in southern Spain, with known BTV contact during the previous years, were tested by means of RT-PCR and BTV s4 nucleic acid was detected. More work is currently being done with wild ruminant samples. With regard to clinical cases of BTV disease in wild ruminants, no cases have been diagnosed by IREC, or reported elsewhere in Spain. This observation together with the current known BTV presence in wild ruminants led us to think that the BTV serotype 4 did not cause clinical disease in wild ruminants. However, more information is required in regard to serotype 1 which has recently entered Spain, in which virulence appears to be higher than that of s4.

From the results of our study, and the reports from Belgium and Germany, we are not sure that European wild ruminants are susceptible to BTV. Nevertheless, information on BTV pathogenicity is not available for European wild ruminants and much work is still required to elucidate the real role of wildlife in BTV epidemiology in Europe.

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### **BTV-8 in wildlife in Northern Europe.**

The information below is associated with the developing BT8 situation in farmed ruminants, and has been compiled from various sources including web articles.

Germany: - 2006/2007 hunting season, 1016 red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) (2 +ve), 419 roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) (12 +ve), 53 moufflon (*Ovis musimon*) (2 +ve) and 391 unidentified species (2 +ve) from eight Federal States were sampled. The positive serological samples were only recorded in the Federal State of Northrhine-Westfalia, in the area where livestock was most severely affected. Also one bison (*Bison bonasus*) was shown to be positive by ELISA and PCR.

Belgium: - 2005, 262 (0 +ve) wild hunter-killed red and roe deer were sampled. In 2006, 684 hunter-killed deer had a seroprevalence of 0.58%. Samples were from 25 of the 37 Cantonnements where wild deer were known to be present. Veterinary surveillance of 102 wild deer, either found dead or culled due to malaise, identified one roe deer with lesions suggestive of BT but this was not confirmed by RT-PCR.

The Netherlands: - 2006, 60 hunted roe deer sampled in the south. All were seronegative.

Alex Barlow, VLA Wildlife Group, VLA Langford. [a.barlow@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:a.barlow@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Summary of Current HPAI H5N1 Asian lineage Status in Wild Birds and Poultry**

Asian lineage Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 remains an ever present and evolving global animal and public health threat. In South East Asia, notably Indonesia where HPAI is generally endemic in bird populations, there has been a marked resurgence over recent months in reports of disease in both poultry and people. Reports of HPAI H5N1 continue in Burma, Bangladesh, the Middle East, West and North Africa (especially Egypt, also with linked human cases), southern parts of China and the Russian Federation. There is an apparent temporal trend of westward spread of these cases over the period March to September 2007 including confirmed reports in wild birds, but the majority in domestic poultry. This is indicative of both spread and persistence of the virus in backyard and commercial poultry populations, some of which are vaccinated, as well as in wild birds. However the true extent of infection is not known.

In the European Union there have been 306 wild bird reports of Asian lineage HPAI H5N1 since mid June 2007 (European Commission, 2007). These cases were in three member states, Germany (298), France (7), and the Czech Republic (1). No additional member states have been affected this quarter. Cases were confirmed in Mute swan (*Cygnus olor*), Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), Greylag geese (*Anser anser*), with the majority in Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*). Molecular and epidemiological studies indicated that these incidents were due to a new independent introduction of H5N1 HPAI virus into the EU. The phylogenetic group of this virus comprises a lineage originating from the Middle East and some Russian Federation isolates. It is considered a possibility that it may have been introduced into wild bird populations in a number of discrete pockets and maintained at a very low level that remained unnoticed.

### *References*

European Commission, (2007). DG Health and Consumer Protection. Animal Disease Notification System: See Highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 cases in wild birds in the Community reported to the Animal Disease Information System (ADNS) in 2007 (as of 30 October 2007).

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/adns/adns\\_wildbirds2007.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/adns/adns_wildbirds2007.pdf)

Richard Irvine, VLA Avian Virology

## **Population explosion of voles in Northern Spain**

This short summary has been compiled from press articles and web articles from conservation groups, however in the European context it was unusual and therefore noteworthy.

During the summer of 2007, a population explosion of common voles (*Microtus arvalis*) also known as bank voles, in Castilla-Leon region, in North Spain, has lead to severe damage in agriculture crops. Measures to control it have included burning and ploughing fields, and poisoning with clorofacinone and bromadiolone. Conservation groups and scientists believe that these measures are not sufficient, and have particularly criticised poisoning because of the severe consequences for the ecosystem.

At the same time, more than 300 cases of tularemia in humans have been diagnosed in the region, and are believed to be associated with the vole explosion.

There are several web references -

<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ew/2007/071108.asp#1>

[http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-16-09-2007/abc/Sociedad/matar-topillos-a-ca%C3%B1onazos\\_164834100659.html](http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-16-09-2007/abc/Sociedad/matar-topillos-a-ca%C3%B1onazos_164834100659.html)

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### **To all students interested in wildlife diseases research**

Have you always wanted to do more with your passion for wildlife diseases? Are you interested in wildlife research and do you want to meet people with the same interest? Do you have the talent to organize with other students, activities for students all over Europe and abroad?

### **then apply for a position in the EWDA Student Chapter Board!**

Being an officer of the Student Chapter will enable you to share all your interests in research and wildlife diseases with other students and researchers from all over Europe. The student chapter, an active and growing part of the European Wildlife Disease Association, is the ideal way to realize all your creative ideas how to let people share their knowledge with each other. You will meet students from all over Europe and beyond, and will get "a look into the world of research". It is the ideal starting point for students that are interested in a career in wildlife diseases.

To apply for a position in the EWDA Student Chapter Board, please visit the student website at [www.ewda.org](http://www.ewda.org) , and send the requested information to [ewdastudent@gmail.com](mailto:ewdastudent@gmail.com) . You can also send questions about the board to this address.

The EWDA Student Chapter Board '06-'08 look forward to hearing from you.  
- Miriam Maas, EWDA Student Representative-

### **European Section**

Material for publication in *News from Europe* can include recent wildlife disease outbreaks and new diseases in Europe, short case and meeting reports; job and scholarship announcements. We encourage submissions, and will help with the English language, if required. The deadline for the next issue is October 2007.

Please mail, fax or e-mail submissions to, Paul Duff, VLA Diseases of Wildlife Scheme, VLA Penrith, Merrythought, Calthwaite, PENRITH, Cumbria, CA11 9RR, United Kingdom, e-mail [p.duff@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:p.duff@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk). Fax ++44(0)-1768-885314 /phone ++44(0)-1768-885295.

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**For the MEETING AND CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS of the *supplement***

The 8th Conference of the European Wildlife Disease Association, Rovinj, Croatia, October 2-5, 2008. The European Wildlife Disease Association (EWDA) will hold its biennial Conference on the Adriatic coast, in Rovinj, Croatia. The EWDA invites members and others interested in all aspects of wildlife diseases and in promoting wildlife health to submit papers and attend the Conference. Through the quality and the content of presentations we strive to make the EWDA Conference the leading event for the dissemination of important scientific information, as well as an enjoyable one. Veterinarians, pathologists, zoologists, wildlife biologists, epidemiologists, ecologists, and any person interested in wildlife health should attend and join together in what will be a challenging opportunity to discuss the imminent issues surrounding wildlife diseases. Associates from an array of animal and human health fields will also attend, promoting and sharing professional knowledge and discussing topics of mutual interest. As we invite you to Croatia, we want you to share with us the feeling, and the spirit of "The Mediterranean as It Once Was". The Croatian Veterinary Institute will host the event. The town of Rovinj is one of the most popular seaside resorts in Croatia. It is located on the west coast of the Istrian peninsula and as such is a focal point in the Northern Adriatic, offering a wide range of interests for visitors in a picturesque ancient town, surrounded by beautiful pine forests. Registration for the conference opens on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008. The deadline for abstract submissions is June 16th 2008. For more information on the conference program and important dates please visit the conference website at <http://www.ewda2008.org>.