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Germany

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Bluetongue Update: Disease continues to Spread in Germany

2007

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Report Highlights:

The number of reported Blue Tongue Disease (BT) cases since January 1, 2007 has increased to 14,174, with the majority of cases having occurred in August - October. Currently, there is no vaccine available. The German Research Institute for Animal Health (FLI) hopes that a vaccine could be approved in 2008. The economic impact of BT-8 is highest for sheep farmers. The indemnity program only covers the current value of the animals, replacement costs and disease related reductions in productivity are not covered.

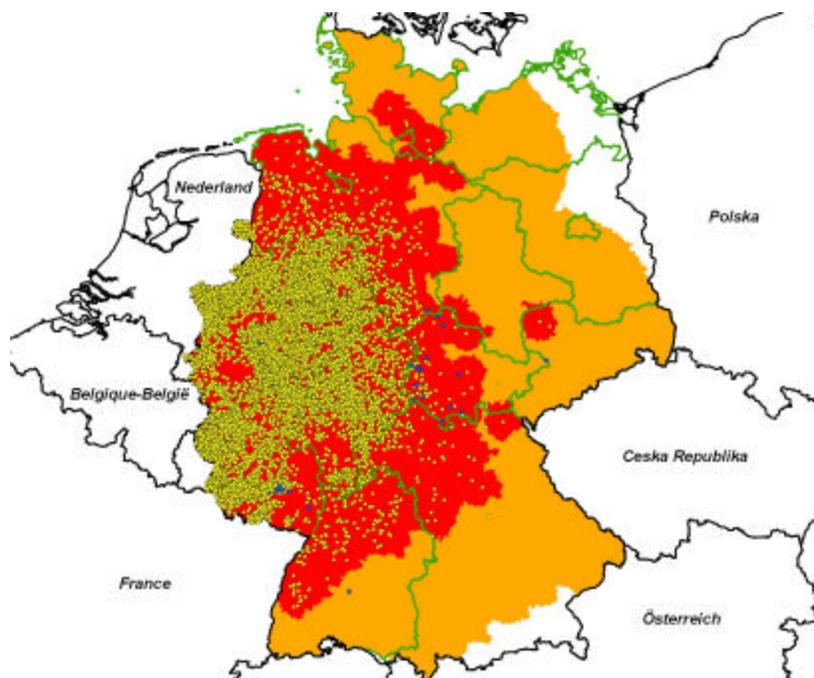
Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Semi-Annual Report
Berlin [GM1]
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From January 1 through October 15, 2007, Germany reported 14,174 cases of Blue Tongue Disease serotype 8 (BT-8) compared to 885 cases in all of 2006. The first outbreak occurred in North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) close to the border to the Netherlands in August 2006. In the meantime, BT-8 has spread north-, east-, and southwards. The rapid spread suggests that the virus has become endemic in North-West Europe.

Protection and surveillance zones are large (20 and 150 km) compared to other diseases because BT is transmitted through midges (*culicoides ssp.*) that can be transported by wind over 100 km. Transport of susceptible animals outside of the restricted zones and from the protection to the surveillance zone is only allowed under certain restrictions, as outlined in EU decision 2005/393^{1,2} and subject to approval by the local veterinary authority. Within the zones, transport is not restricted. Transport to restricted zones in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, and France is possible under certain conditions and subject to approval by the local veterinary authority and by the receiving member state.

Currently, most of the German territory falls under a protection or surveillance zone except for the eastern parts of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Brandenburg, and the southern parts of Bavaria (see map below).

Map: BT-8 cases, Protection and Surveillance Zones, as of October 8, 2007



Yellow dots = confirmed cases
 Blue dots = suspected but not yet confirmed cases
 Red = 20 km protection zone
 Orange = 150 km surveillance zone
 Source: Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute (FLI)

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/consleg/2005/D/02005D0393-20070302-en.pdf>

² Examples for conditions that have to be met to allow transport out of the zones include but are not limited to a negative BT-8 test, the absence of any clinical symptoms, and a treatment with insect repellents.

BT is a non-contagious viral disease transmitted by midges (*culicoides ssp.*). The majority of BT cases occurs in the summer and fall because of the biology of its vector. As a result, control measures for BT differ from more highly contagious diseases such as Avian Influenza (AI) and do not involve the destruction of large number of animals.

BT affects ruminants and sheep. While only sheep fall seriously ill, BT may reduce milk production and fertility in infected cows. BT does not affect humans.

BT was first recorded in Germany in August 2006. For details on geographical distribution and affected animal types, please refer to tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Number of Confirmed BT Cases, by State and Month as of Oct. 15, 2007

State	Total 2006	January 2007	February 2007	June 2007	July 2007	August 2007	September 2007	October 2007	Total 2007
North Rhine-Westphalia	802	44		1	9	1,501	5,118	985	7658
Hesse	5	6	1		1	256	1776	194	2234
Rhineland-Palatinate	73	15			2	413	1558	194	2182
Lower Saxony	5	9				22	734	421	1186
Saarland						13	237	99	349
Bayern							164	72	236
Baden-Wuerttemberg							75	141	216
Thuringia							66	28	94
Schleswig-Holstein							3	7	10
Saxony							1	3	4
Bremen								2	2
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania								2	2
Saxony-Anhalt								1	1
Berlin									0
Brandenburg									0
Hamburg									0
Total	885	74	1	1	12	2,205	9,732	2,149	14,174

Table 2: Number of confirmed BT cases by Type of Animal Holding and Month

Type of Animal Holding	2006	January 2007	February 2007	June 2007	July 2007	August 2007	September 2007	October 2007	Total 2007
Cattle	564	72	1	1	5	963	4,953	1,307	7,302
Sheep	306				7	1,196	4,518	790	6,511
Goats						6	54	11	71
Mixed	2	1				37	187	33	258
Game parks	13	1				3	20	8	32
Total	885	74	1	1	12	2,205	9,732	2,149	14,174

Note: as of October 15, 2007

Source: German Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Consumer Protection (BMELV),

Currently no vaccine available

The fast spread of the disease has prompted a discussion about control measures. Recently, the German state (*Laender*) ministers in charge of veterinary issues, have asked the German government to call for an EU wide surveillance plan that includes wild ruminants and to be co-financed by the EU.

Currently there is no suitable vaccine available against BT-8. Active vaccines that are used in South Africa are said to have too many side effects. In addition, it would not be possible to distinguish infected from vaccinated animals, which make disease monitoring and control more difficult and incurs trade restrictions. According to FLI, two EU based companies are working on developing an inactive vaccine. FLI is currently preparing a study to test the effectiveness of one of these vaccines and is hopeful that a vaccine could be approved in 2008.

Economic Impact

Bovines

High impact for breeding animals for export to unrestricted zones. A number of countries do not accept breeding animals originating from a protection or surveillance zone, which effectively inhibits exports to those countries. Even if transport/export is allowed subject to conditions, these conditions add extra costs, which reduce profitability and competitiveness.

Exports in bovine animals to non-EU countries was significantly hampered when BT-8 was first detected in August 2006, because all export certificates became invalid. Some countries, like Russia for example, were quick to develop and accept new export certificates and trade resumed quickly, while trade with other countries, for example Algeria, stopped completely.

Table 3: German Exports of Cattle for Breeding (HS code 010210), in number of heads

	2004	2005	2006	Jan-June 2007
Total	71,389	81,391	93,232	46,752
Russia	1,325	0	19,003	19,842
Italy	13,974	16,348	12,819	2,737
Spain	7,991	7,078	7,849	1,035
Algeria	20,884	13,247	5,687	0

Source: GTA

The impact for movement of other live animals actually decreases, as the zones get larger because transport within the zones is not restricted and transport from the protection to the surveillance zone is possible under certain conditions.

For dairy production, BT reportedly negatively affects productivity (milk production), fertility and the rate of stillbirths. The impact is difficult to assess. Some press report declines in milk production of up to 5 kg per cow and day. For meat production, the effect of BT is reportedly comparable to that of a cold and thus a lot less severe.

While the decrease in milk production can be serious for the individual farmers³, it has not yet significantly affected the German milk production as a whole. At this point, the impact on the German milk production is estimated to be less than 0.1 percent⁴.

Sheep

Reportedly, the mortality rate for infected sheep can go as high as 80 percent. As a result, sheep farmers are much more impacted by BT than cattle farmers and some fear for their existence. Exports of breeding sheep has stopped almost completely because of BT-8.

Table 4: German Exports of Sheep for Breeding (HS code 01041010), in number of heads

	2004	2005	2006	Jan-June 2007
Total	2,835	2,088	890	53
Serbia	0	0	253	53
Bulgaria	275	0	225	0
Greece	36	19	111	0
Romania	0	220	0	0
Czech Republic	2,248	1,822	0	0

Source: GTA

Indemnity program

The German Animal Disease Law includes a mandatory insurance-like program (*Tierseuchenkasse*) for certain animals, including cattle and sheep. By law, all owners of certain animals (livestock, poultry, horses, sheep, goats, farmed game, and bees) are required to register their animals with public authorities and to pay a yearly fee into the program. The annual fee is based on the number of animals and varies by species. Indemnity is granted if an animal dies from a notifiable animal disease or if the official regional veterinarian orders an animal to be destroyed in connection with an animal disease outbreak. Beginning in 2007, BT is included in the list of diseases for which compensation is granted. The amount of compensation is equal to the current value of the animal. It is calculated by the official veterinarian. Replacement costs and consequential losses are not covered, neither are disease related reductions in productivity.

³ In 2005, the average milk production per cow amounted to 6761 kg per year or 23 kg per day (based on a 305 day lactation period). Therefore, for the "average cow" a loss of 5 kg per day translates into a 20 percent reduction in production.

⁴ Calculated based on a 305 day lactation period and the assumption that half of the positively tested cattle were dairy cows, which all would show a 5 kg per day decline in milk production. This would total in a production decrease of about 6000 MT compared to an annual Germany milk production of 27 million MT.

Each state administers its own program and this explains the differences between state policies. While the majority of funds come from premiums paid by the animal owners, some states provide additional funding. Also, in contrast to insurance, the indemnity program cannot go bankrupt. If funds are insufficient, for instance in the case of a major disease outbreak, the government would step in.

Key facts on German Cattle and Sheep production

Preliminary data from the most current animal census for Germany reports 12.7 million cattle, thereof 4.1 million dairy cows, and 2.44 million sheep.

Related reports:

Report Number	Title	Date Released
GM7028	Update on Bluetongue Disease in Germany http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200707/146291646.pdf	07/10/2007
GM6031	First Ever Detection of Bluetongue Disease in Germany http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200608/146208728.pdf	08/21/2006
E47060	Livestock and Products Annual http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200707/146291787.pdf	07/20/2007