

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: October 29,2020

Report Number: IC2020-0005

Report Name: Scrapie Identified in Sheep in Iceland

Country: Iceland

Post: The Hague

Report Category: Livestock and Products, Pest/Disease Occurrences

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Report Highlights:

Scrapie (a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats) was confirmed in a sheep on the Stóru-Akrar farm (home to 800 sheep) in Skagafjörður, Iceland. Subsequently, the disease was identified on three additional farms: Syðri-Hofdalir and Grænamýri in Blönduhlíð and Hof in Hjaltadal. The government is currently assessing the disease's prevalence but anticipates a significant number of animals will need to be culled.

General Information:

On October 22, 2020, the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority (known as Matvælastofnun) confirmed the presence of [scrapie](#) (a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats) in a sheep on the Stóru-Akrar farm (home to 800 sheep) in Skagafjörður, Iceland. Subsequently, the disease was identified on three additional farms: Syðri-Hofdalir and Grænamýri in Blönduhlíð and Hof in Hjaltadal. Matvælastofnun has taken samples from nearly two thousand sheep since the suspicion of scrapie arose and is mapping the transport of sheep to and from farms. Further results will be announced as soon as they are available.¹

Iceland's Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Kristján Þór Júlíusson, noted this is a “major blow”² and added:

I have been following the progress of this case closely in recent days and it is clear that the damage is great and tangible. Efforts are being made to understand the extent of the disease and Matvælastofnun is now mapping the possible spread. I have issued clear instructions to the Ministry {of Fisheries and Agriculture} and Matvælastofnun that we do everything in our power to support farmers in the area through this shock.³

The total number of sheep that need to be culled is not known, but there are “strong indications that it will be significant.”⁴ Matvælastofnun has requested that the Environment Agency assist with the culling.⁵ The Government has also signaled its intention to pay compensation costs to farmers where culls are necessary.

Matvælastofnun noted there is no evidence that people are at risk from contact with or their consumption of products such as meat, offal, and milk. It also states that there is also no risk for people working on sheep farms or in slaughterhouses.

While detected elsewhere in the country more recently, Icelandic media reports scrapie was previously detected in Skagafjörður in 2016. The media added that it is thought to be the first location where scrapie arrived in Iceland -- via an English ram that was transported to the fjord in 1878.⁶

Attachments:

No Attachments.

¹ <https://www.mast.is/is/um-mast/frettir/frettir/utbreidsla-ridu-a-thrja-nyja-baei-stadfest>

² https://icelandmonitor.mbl.is/news/news/2020/10/27/case_of_scrapie_confirmed_in_north_iceland/

³ <https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/10/27/Riduveiki-i-Skagafirdi-raedd-i-rikisstjorn/>

⁴ https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2020/10/27/gerum_allt_sem_i_okkar_valdi_stendur/

⁵ <https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/10/27/Riduveiki-i-Skagafirdi-raedd-i-rikisstjorn/>

⁶ <https://www.icelandreview.com/society/scrapie-detected-in-skagafjordur/>