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Epizootic Situation in Russia

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Report Highlights:

The Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) published a semiannual report on the epizootic situation in Russia for the first half of 2010. The report points out an acute deterioration of the epizootic situation for several infectious diseases, including African swine fever, bovine and sheep brucellosis, rabies, and leptospirosis. In addition to these infectious diseases, VPSS stresses caution regarding bluetongue as it is associated with imported livestock.

Executive Summary

The Russian VPSS published a semiannual report on the epizootic situation in the country for the first half of 2010. Dr. Nikolai Vlasov, CVO, drew attention to the Russian veterinary society about the acute worsening of the epizootic situation for several infectious diseases: African swine fever virus (ASF), classical swine fever (CSV), bovine and sheep brucellosis, rabies, and leptospirosis. He also brought to their attention the threat of importing animals with bluetongue and bovine leucosis. Russian veterinarians do not consider animals to be at risk for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in spite of two outbreaks near the border with China and Mongolia. They indicated improving trends for Newcastle disease, bovine tuberculosis and Avian Influenza (AI).

Chief Veterinary Officer Appealed to the Russian Veterinary Society

On September 10, 2010, the Russian Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance Service (VPSS) report, prepared by the Federal Center of Animal Health Protection in Vladimir, was published on their website to report the epizootic situation <http://www.fsvps.ru/fsvps-docs/ru/iac/2010/files/iac2010_2.pdf>. Dr. Vlasov, Russian CVO, issued an appeal to the Heads of territorial offices of the VPSS, Heads of veterinary administration of the Russian Federation, veterinary specialists, and veterinary industry <<http://www.fsvps.ru/fsvps/news/2453.html>>. In the appeal, Dr. Vlasov drew attention to the increasing threat related to the spread of several infectious diseases in the Russian Federation. Dr. Vlasov stated that the agricultural industry is worsening from the viruses and diseases in the largest territories of the country. Dr. Vlasov stressed the following seven threatening facts:

1. ASF outbreaks continuing;
2. Chronic diseases are worsening, especially brucellosis;
3. Nature-born and human-related diseases are worsening, such as rabies and leptospirosis;
4. Subclinical infections are not improving, first and foremost – leucosis;
5. Bluetongue is threatening due to imports of infected European cattle and imports from Mongolia where the virus is out of control, as well as via carriers (e.g., bloodsucking insects) from Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland;
6. Brucellosis, leptospirosis, CSF, and ASF exceeded epidemiological thresholds in the 2nd quarter of 2010;
7. Diseases will continue to spread if previously infected areas are not decontaminated.

The CVO also mentioned the continuing threat of FMD as well as sheep and goat pox in Siberia and the Far East due to its proximity with China and Mongolia. There were two cases of FMD nearby the border in Chita (Zabaikalskiy Kray).

Improved situations include lower incidences of Newcastle disease, Pseudorabies, and Bovine tuberculosis. Also, the epizootic situation is stable for Rinderpest and Avian Influenza.

African Swine Fever

ASF is currently the main threat for the Russian livestock industry. Starting in 2010, OIE (World Organization for Animal Health) considered the disease as endemic to Russia, which means the disease

continually exists within the territory. Veterinarians registered 32 outbreaks in the first half of 2010 and 31 outbreaks during only two months of the second half of 2010. This has negatively impacted primarily the South Federal Okrug and Northern Caucasus Okrug. The epizootic forecast for Voronezh, Saratov, Tambov and Belgorod oblasts is also negative.

Dr. Vlasov specified the main causes for the spread of ASF in Russia:

- delays in anti-epizootic measures during outbreaks;
- illegal shipments of pigs and pork inside the country;
- lack of animal traceability as a national program;
- lack of good husbandry of the small private breeders, farmers, and small meat-processing facilities, which, according to the present veterinary law, are outside official veterinary supervision; and
- lack of endorsement of a unified instruction for ASF containment.

The Ministry of Agriculture organized a seminar “Monitoring the Epizootic Situation, ASF, Among Domestic and Wild Swine: Forecast and Measures to Contain the Spread of the Disease” on October 9, 2010. Lilia Surgucheva, Deputy Director of Veterinary Division, led the event, speaking about the uprising concern of ASF. In attendance were several Head of the Regional Veterinary Services along with Russia’s CVO, Dr. Vlasov.

The consensus forecast is that ASF will continue to deteriorate over the next few years. Dr. Vlasov brought the audience’s attention to the new appearances of the disease in the Lower Volga-river region (Astrakhan oblast, Volgograd oblast, Saratov oblast, Samara oblast). As stated, wild boars have contributed to only 4% of ASF’s spread. On the contrary, agro-industrial operations do not follow proper guidelines, which contribute, for 80% of the spread. In Rostov oblast, an investigation shows that an outbreak on August 14, 2010, at “Russian Pork” (RUSSKAYA SVININA) resulted from the neglect of the basic sanitary rules. The facility of Russian Pork was clean, but it had allowed unsanitary trucks from its buyers enter the territory of the establishment. In Rostov oblast, additional problems are occurring because swine producers do not have the facilities or training to destroy the infected animals. As reported, these facilities are too expensive and require financing from the federal budget.

The Russian veterinary service is well equipped to provide quick diagnostics for ASF. The veterinary services’ labs have real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machines. The most common method is the immune-fluorescent test. In the future, Russian vets intend to introduce the less expensive High Resolution Melting (HRM) test.

Bluetongue

Until recently, Russian veterinarians had not registered the disease in the Russian Federation since 1994. The first cases of positive tests of bluetongue appeared in imported cattle in 2008. The veterinary service tested 4,194 head of cattle for bluetongue during the first quarter of 2010 and did not reveal any positive animals. However, after the tests of 6,116 head of cattle in the second quarter of 2010, 58 of the 333 animals tested in Kaluga Oblast turned up positive.

Classical Swine Fever

According to the CVO, the situation of CSF has only worsened from the outbreak in 2004.

Veterinarians registered 10 unfavorable locations in the territory of the Russian Federation in the first quarter of 2010 and the numbers of outbreaks continued to grow in the second quarter of the year, including domestic swine in Voronezh oblast and wild boars in Saratov, Voronezh, and Volgograd oblast. The epidemiological threshold of CSF is expanding, indicating a higher risk of the infection spreading among small pig farms and private breeders in the center of European Russia.

Brucellosis

There was a continuous negative trend in the epizootic situation for brucellosis in Russia since 2004. The epidemiological incidence significantly surpassed the standard safety level in 2010. Veterinarians registered 34 outbreaks of bovine brucellosis and 6 outbreaks in sheep and goats in the first quarter of 2010. In the second quarter of 2010 there were 110 bovine outbreaks and 11 sheep and goat outbreaks.

According to the Russian veterinary service, these outbreaks are uncontrolled because agricultural entities are violating the veterinary legislation. Another reason is the lack of control provided by local veterinary services and diagnostic capabilities in some regions, resulting from insufficient finances.

Veterinary services do not differentiate *Brucella abortus* and *Br. suis*. The situation specifically with *Br. canis* is considered out of control. The most susceptible regions in terms of spreading the disease are Stavropol kray, Dagestan Republic, Astrakhan and Rostov oblast, and Tyva Republic in Siberia.

Russian vets also believe the spread of brucellosis in wild animals and reindeers is larger than reported.

Rabies

The territory of Russia is unfavorable for the control of rabies. The situation is a result of the endemic origin of the infection, starting with the natural reservoirs among wild and domestic carnivores. Table 1 reflects the incidence by animal categories, according to reports of the Russian veterinary service. The worst situations are in the following four regions: Bashkortostan Republic -140 unfavorable sites, Tatar Stan - 131, Belgorod -122, and Voronezh oblast - 113. According to Russian vets, the rate of incidence of rabies can be decreased if domestic homeless dogs and cats are controlled.

Table 1. Russian Federation. Incidences of Rabies in 2010.

Categories of animals	1 st quarter			2 nd quarter		
	Died-off		Outbreaks	Died-off		Outbreaks
	Number	%	Number	Number	%	Number
Wild animals	759	54	1,211	450	46	850
Domestic carnivores	395	28		341	35	
Agricultural animals	249	18		186	19	
Total	1,403	100		977	100	

Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis had been decreasing for the previous seven years, but the epidemiological standard safety level was exceeded for bovine leptospirosis in 2010. The veterinary service already revealed 32 unfavorable locations for cattle and three for pigs in 2010. This is the highest incidence of bovine leptospirosis for the last seven years. The situation is not good, especially in Ivanovo oblast, Stavropol

kray, and Yakut Republic.

Leucosis

Bovine leucosis is a common disease in Russia. The trend for the last seven years is unfavorable. According to the Russian veterinary service, the situation is very difficult to control. Every year, 50% of the total herd is tested serologically for leucosis. According to lab results, about 10% are positive for the disease. Only 5% of positive animals were slaughtered resulting from the tests. In the first quarter of 2010, vets tested 2.91 million head of cattle; 232,392 were positive and 6,997 were slaughtered. In the second quarter, vets tested 5.03 million head, and 345,021 were positive (no data for slaughtered).

Newcastle Disease

Newcastle disease has a decreasing trend. Veterinarians revealed one outbreak in Ivanovo oblast and one outbreak in Kemerovo oblast in the second quarter of 2010. Vaccination of poultry has resulted in the steady decrease of the disease. Meanwhile, the epizootic situation for Newcastle disease continues to be endemic for Russia.

Foot-and-Mouth Disease

The Russian veterinary service recognizes the country as free of FMD. However, there were two cases of FMD nearby the borders in Chita (Zabaikalskiy Kray) on July 5 and August 26, 2010, resulting in 196 sick cattle and 34 pigs.

Avian Influenza

The trend of AI is improving. Russian vets evaluate the epizootic situation as post-epidemic. The virus H5N1 appeared in Russia in 2003. The veterinary service registered several outbreaks among commercial poultry flocks in 2005-2009. The threat of a new intrusion with migrant wild birds still exists: 367 wild birds died-off in Tyva Republic (South of middle Siberia) in the second quarter of 2010.

Pseudorabies (Morbus Aujeszkyi)

The incidences of swine pseudorabies declined during last seven years despite Russia's status as being an endemic country for the disease. To date, vaccination has shown good results. Vets revealed three new unfavorable locations in Udmurtia Republic and Saratov oblast in the second quarter of 2010. As many as 22 pigs got sick and died off.

Anthrax

The situation concerning anthrax is steadily unfavorable because of existing soil deposits. According to the Russian veterinary service, the main cause for continuing problems is that the registrations are incorrect. There were two outbreaks in Dagestan Republic and Stavropol kray among cattle in the second quarter of 2010. After publication of the semiannual report, vets revealed 214 sick cattle in Krasnodarskiy kray in the period of September 19-27. Of those 214 cattle, 3 died-off, and 19 were

destroyed.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Russian is an endemic country for bovine tuberculosis. Veterinarians registered four new incidences in the first quarter of 2010 and six incidents in the second quarter. Meanwhile the general status has been good for the last seven years.

Sheep and Goat pox

Sheep and goat pox has been absent in Russia for the last two years. However, according to Russian vets, there is high risk of the disease from Kazakhstan, China, and South Caucasus. Veterinary services vaccinated 315,941 head of sheep in the regions next to border.

Rinderpest

In April 2010, the OIE recognized Russia as a country free of rinderpest.