

REPORT
ASF Expert Mission to Luxembourg
EUVET Initiative

Period: 5-6 May 2019

Rapporteur: Vittorio Guberti (ISPRA, Italy).

Terms of reference of the EUVET mission to Luxembourg

1. The experts should provide scientific, technical, managerial and practical assistance on-the-spot on the refinement of the most suitable preventive measures for African Swine Fever (ASF) under local conditions, especially as regards comprehensive management of the restricted areas.
2. The experts should report exclusively to the Commission services and the Luxembourg authorities. Continuous contact should be guaranteed between the team, the Commission services and Luxembourg authorities.
3. The experts should provide a written report with conclusions and recommendations aimed to the competent authority. A report to the Commission and the Member States in the framework of the Standing Committee on Plant, Animal, Food and Feed should be delivered.
4. The experts shall operate under the provisions laid down in Commission Decision 2007/142/EC and in particular on the basis of the standard rules of procedure for groups of experts.

Places visited during the mission:

Luxembourg: meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development with representatives of the different Ministries and Administrations concerned (2nd day list of participants) to discuss the ASF preventive measures enforced by the Country;
At risk area: southern and northern segments of the fence at the border with France and Belgium;

Domestic pigs

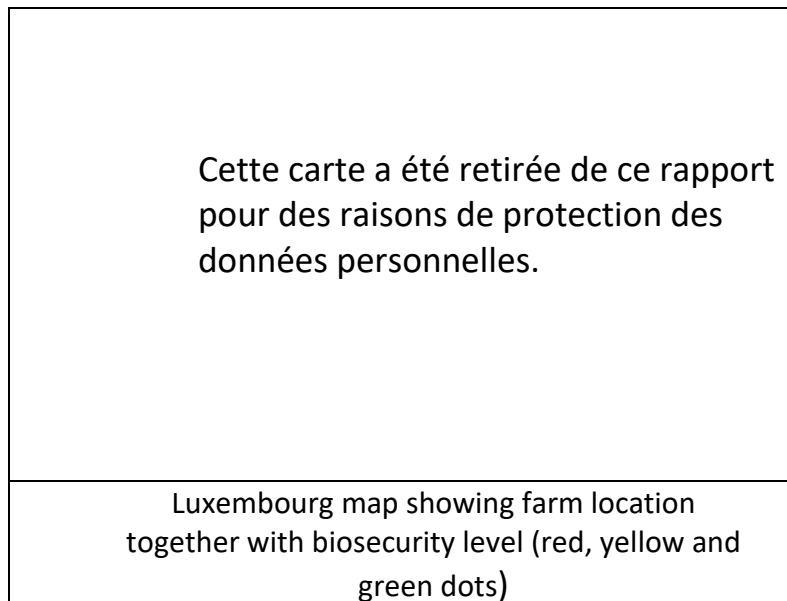
Domestic pig census has been carried out in October 2018 and it is systematically updated. According to the level of biosecurity, farms have been assigned to three categories: red (poor biosecurity), yellow and green.

In commercial and not commercial farms there are about 80.000 pigs in 116 holdings and among them 37 are open-air farms.

Biosecurity situation is shown in the table below.

	Red		Yellow		green		Luxembourg	
	N. hold	N. pigs	N. hold	N. pigs	N. hold	N. pigs	N. hold	N. pigs
commercial large size	0	0	0	0	23	66922		
commercial middle size	5	2213	9	2693	15	7408		
small size	25	261	29	255	10	126		
Total commercial	30	2474	38	2948	48	74456	116	79878
Non commercial	11	19	11	29			22	48

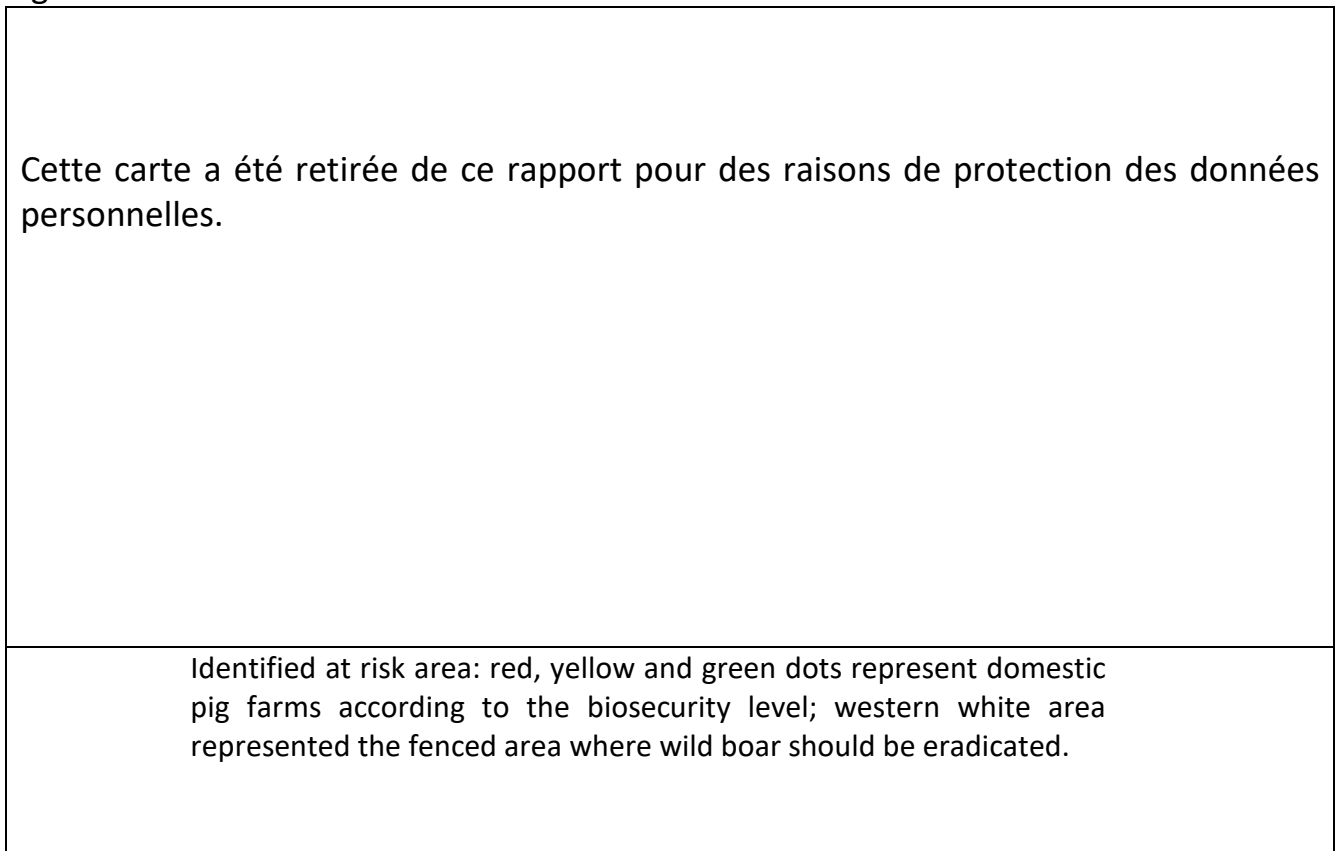
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Identified at risk area

Due to the Belgian epidemiological situation it has been set a risk area; the area is delimited by the Belgium and France borders (West and South) by highway A6 at north and by the highway A4 at east (Figure 2). In the area at risk, 9 holdings with 4300 pigs are present; 3 commercial farms (4250 animals, all farm with high biosecurity); 6 small farms with 50 animals with insufficient biosecurity measures (yellow and red).

Figure 2



Wild boar

Out of the total surface of the Country (2586,36 km²) hunting is carried out in about 2200 km² of which 900 km² of forest and 1300 km² agricultural land (50% pasture and meadows).

The wild boar population increased from the early 80s; nowadays the population seems stabilised also considering that the new hunting law sets a minimum number of animal to be hunted for each hunting area. 2000 hunting licenses are annually released plus 250 short terms hunting permits for foreign hunters. There are 600 hunting grounds with a mean surface of 420 ha. Wild boar hunting is allowed all year long without maximum quota. By now hunters have been informed about the importance of early detection and

carcass reporting.

During the past 10 years (2007-2017) an average of 5100 wild boars have been hunted (2,3 hunted wild boar/km²).

Passive surveillance

Passive surveillance was implemented from September 2018; a telephone hotline is available to facilitate the reporting of dead wild boars to all concerned persons (farmers, hunters, general public). The carcasses of wild boar are promptly transported to a collection centre of the nature conservation service or the Luxembourg State Veterinary laboratory (LMVE) or samples are taken in the field and then transported to the LMVE meanwhile carcasses are stored in the laboratory until the end of the analysis and are then safely disposed under the supervision of the Nature Conservation Service and the Veterinary service by the rendering plant RENDAC. Laboratory tests are usually performed within 72 hours. The LMVE performs the ASF tests and the “Sciensano” laboratory in Brussels that acts also as Luxembourg ASF NRL will confirm positive tests.

Until now 173 carcasses collected through all the Country have been tested negative.

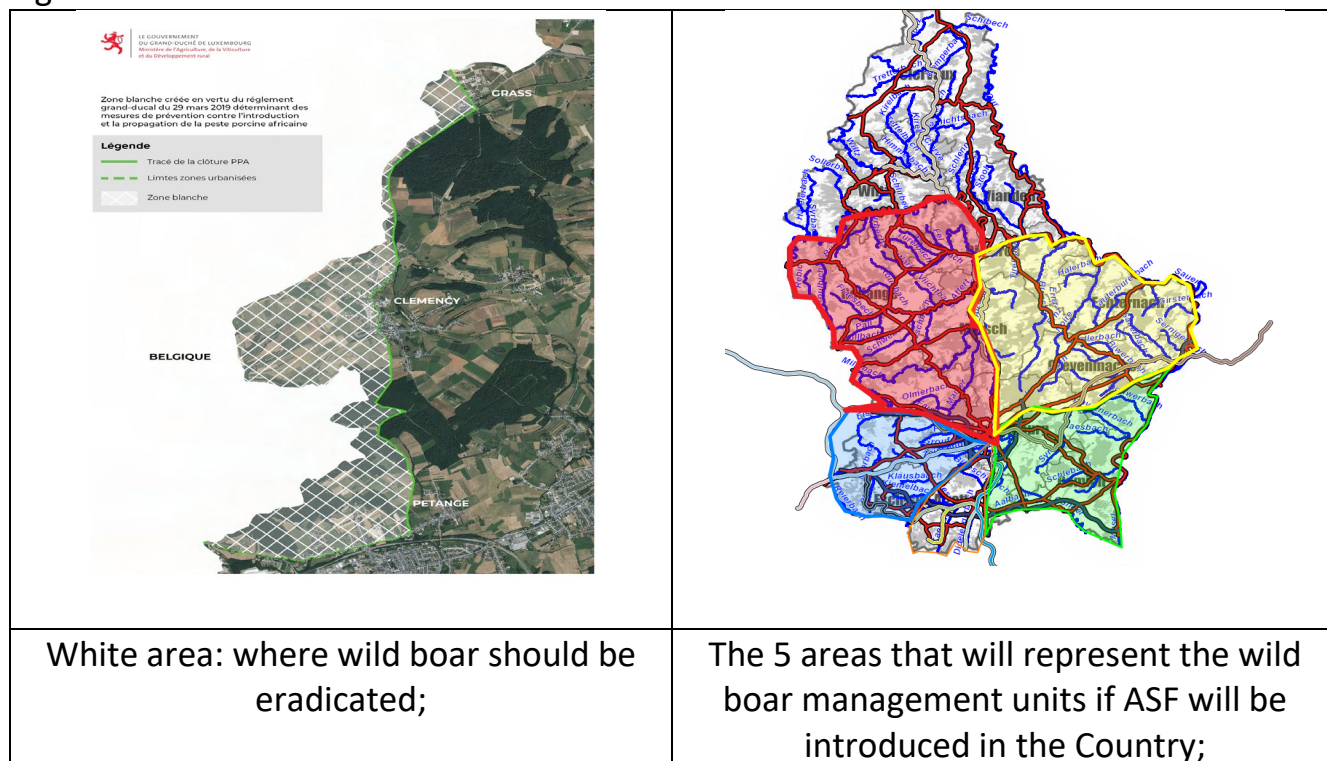
Prevention

A fence has been built close to the Belgian border with the aim to reduce as much as possible wild boar movements between the two countries. The fence is similar to the one built in Belgium and already completed at the time of the mission. *De facto* there is a fenced buffer between Belgium and Luxembourg southwest to the highway A6 that reaches the French border.

The CA asked for a complete depopulation (eradication) of the wild boar from the “white area (zone blanche)” created between Belgium and Luxembourg (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Hunters are in charge to depopulate the fenced wild boar population. In practice, considering what has been planned in Belgium (single hunts during spring-summer and silent driven hunts from September), a wild boar free area should be created encompassing the borders between the 2 countries.

In the meantime the Country individuated 5 areas that will be the ASF in wild boar management units in case of ASF introduction (average size 400 km²).

Figure 3



Preparedness

Following the detection of ASF in Belgium a Luxembourg ASF Task Force has been set and 3 meetings have been organized since then.

A meeting with pig farmers has been organized on 27th of September 2018 during which the epidemiological situation and the main eradication measures applied in Belgium have been highlighted together with basic biosecurity measures to be applied in any of the Luxembourg pig farm. Next meeting is foreseen for May 2019.

Two meetings with hunters have been held addressing early detection, safe transport and disposal of wild boar carcasses and the applied strategy for ASF prevention in wild boar.

Several trainings have been organised in order to train forestry agents for the sampling and transport of carcasses, transport of samples to the laboratory with special focus on biosecurity and collection of information of the carcasses.

The personnel of the Road Management Authority, which is in charge to collect road-killed wild boars has been trained on biosecurity during the transport of the carcasses.

Collaboration among infected and at risk bordering countries

Following the detection of ASF in Belgium a close collaboration among Belgian, French and Luxembourg CA has been ensured through several meeting among CVOs and experts.

At regional level Luxembourg was invited as observer Country to the EU-Vet missions in Belgium.

A Transboundary Task Force is in place and aimed in promptly exchange information among the region through a weekly tele-conference among the CA of the 3 countries.

RECOMMANDATIONS

- To enhance the awareness activities at all levels including for the general public;
- To maintain a high level of passive surveillance ruling out ASF from each found dead wild boar in the three management units bordering Belgium. In the other two management units all found dead wild boar which dead has no obvious cause have to be tested;
- To increase the biosecurity level in red and yellow farms especially in the identified at risk area or to close red and yellow farms that cannot comply with the requested biosecurity level;
- To set an addressed ASF early detection strategy for the farms (involving farmers, private and public veterinarians) located in the at risk area and in particular in the ones with insufficient biosecurity (red and yellow categories);
- In the white area, the eradication of the wild boar should be finalized by the end of the next summer possibly involving the personnel of the CA in charge of wildlife management;
- The white area should be regularly patrolled for carcass detection (i.e. organised active search of carcasses every 14 days using approximately 1 person every 25-30 ha)
- To increase the hunting effort outside the white areas and in particular in the south western part of the Country; the goal should be to reach 1-1,5 wild boar/km² before reproduction meaning to drastically reduce the actual wild boar population through doubling the hunting bag;
- To strictly maintain the ban of artificial feeding;

Final remark: The working atmosphere during the mission was very good. The colleagues from Luxembourg gave all their support and assistance to facilitate a fruitful mission. The CVET rapporteur wishes to thank all colleagues for their support and help given during the whole mission.