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Self-declaration of the recovery of freedom from African swine fever in all suids by the Czech Republic

Self-declaration submitted to the OIE on 01 April 2019 by Dr Zbyněk Semerád, Director General State Veterinary Administration, Ministry of Agriculture, Czech Republic, OIE Delegate for Czech Republic.

I. Information about Czech Republic status regarding African swine fever

The State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic (SVA) is pleased to report that there have not been any newly detected cases of African swine fever (ASF) in wild boar since the last confirmed positive case of ASF on 15 April 2018 (laboratory confirmation 18/04/18). There are currently no positive cases of ASF within the territory of the Czech Republic (CR); the last outbreak of ASF was resolved on 19 April 2018.

Historically, the first occurrence of ASF virus in the Czech Republic was detected in two wild boars, which were found dead on 21 and 22 June 2017 in the cadastral territory Příluky u Zlína, Zlín District, Zlín Region. The positive finding of ASF was confirmed by the National Reference Laboratory for ASF (NRL), State Veterinary Institute Jihlava on 26 June 2017. As of 28 February 2019 there were 230 cases of ASF registered in wild boar involving 212 cases of wild boar found dead and 18 cases of hunted wild boar. The last ASF positive cases in wild boars were detected on 8 February 2018 in hunted wild boar and on 15 April 2018 in wild boar found dead - however, these carcasses were decomposed (3 - 6 months old). All positive cases were detected in a small area (only 89 km²) in the Zlín District. No outbreak of ASF in domestic pigs was detected in the Czech Republic.

II. ASF Surveillance

ASF is a notifiable disease in the Czech Republic since 1999 according to the Veterinary Act No. 166/1999 Coll.¹. In paragraph §10, there is a list of emergency diseases that are subject to mandatory notification to SVA. The list is provided under Annex 2, of paragraph §10.

There is an ongoing awareness programme in place to encourage reporting of clinical suspicions of ASF in domestic pigs and wild boars carried out in conjunction with the compulsory METHODOLOGY OF

¹ http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/legislativa/pravni-predpisy-mze/tematicky-prehled/Legislativa-MZe_uplna-zneni_zakon-1999-166-viceoblasti.html

ANIMAL HEALTH CONTROL AND VACCINATION for specified pig and other animal diseases during 2018 and 2019^{2,3}, and prescribed in the Veterinary Act paragraph §10 in domestic pigs.

The State Veterinary Administration of the Czech Republic has current knowledge and authority over all domestic and captive wild pig herds in the country and the distribution of wild and feral pigs is well-known. The knowledge on domestic pigs is based on compulsory registration of all farm animals in the Integrated Agricultural Register of Ministry of Agriculture (not publicly available). The distribution of wild boars is processed by the Forest Management Institute (www.uhul.cz) (hunting records from all hunting grounds in the Czech Republic) for the use by the Ministry of Agriculture of the CR and by the SVA, and publicly available.

Legislation and veterinary controls are in place to assure that the domestic pigs are separated by appropriate biosecurity from the wild boar population, mentioned in more detail under section III below. These veterinary controls and biosecurity were ordered through Extraordinary Veterinary Measures within the whole territory of the Czech Republic and they are still in power.

In response to the ASF situation in Europe, the Czech Republic started passive surveillance in wild boars since 2014. For this, Animal Health control Methodology and Vaccination Order was updated [Order 2015](#). All wild boars found dead in the Czech Republic have been tested for ASF. See the results in Table 1.

Table 1. Passive surveillance in wild boars. Number of found dead wild boars and tested for ASF, Czech Republic, 1 January 2014 – 20 June 2017

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017 (until 20. 6.)
No. of tested animals / positive	243 / 0	348 / 0	404 / 0	117 / 0

III. Prevention, control measures and intensified surveillance in response to the outbreak

Veterinary measures have been taken immediately in accordance with the Council Directive 2002/60/EC⁴ and national legislation (Veterinary Act No 166/1999 as amended and decree No 202/2004 on measures for the prevention and control of African swine fever)^{5, 6}. Furthermore, veterinary measures have been taken based on the development of the epidemiological situation.

An infected area (Zlín District) was defined on 27 June 2017 (Commission implementing decision (EU) 2017/1437)⁷. An area with intensive hunting, around the infected area, was determined on 13 July 2017. Based on the results of passive surveillance and home range of wild boar monitored along the year, the high-risk zone for ASF was defined inside the infected area on 18 July 2017 and the low-risk zone (infected area outside the high-risk zone) for ASF was defined inside the infected area on 21 July 2017 (Fig. 1).

Veterinary measures have been established, including ban on all hunting activities in the infected area and a ban on feeding wild boars. Epidemiological investigations were carried out in the defined infected area, including inspection of the sites where the ASF-positive wild boar were found.

Active search of wild boar carcasses was ordered in the infected area. Searching was performed by local hunters under biosecurity measures and supported by payment for each dead wild boar found. Sampling was carried out exclusively in the rendering plant by the official veterinarian. The scented and electric fences were installed on the outer periphery of the high-risk zone for ASF ("core zone" – 57 km²) and ban

² <https://www.svscr.cz/zdravi-zvirat/metodika-kontroly-zdravi-zvirat-a-vakcinace/>

³ <https://www.myslivost.cz/Pro-myslivce/Aktuality/K-MYSLIVECKE-STATISTICE%E2%80%A6>

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002L0060&from=EN>

⁵ <https://www.svscr.cz/zdravi-zvirat/metodika-kontroly-zdravi-zvirat-a-vakcinace/>

⁶ <https://www.myslivost.cz/Pro-myslivce/Aktuality/K-MYSLIVECKE-STATISTICE%E2%80%A6>

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D1437&from=EN>

on entering the core zone without permission of the municipal office was imposed. In the core zone, hunting was strictly prohibited. An exception from the hunting ban was made later, but only for approved local hunters trained by SVS on biosecurity rules during hunting and transport of hunted animals for ensuring no spread of disease. About 1,300 hunters have been trained. However, only individual hunting has been allowed after obtaining sufficient data on disease spread, primarily in the low risk zone (approximately a month after the first findings) and also in the high-risk zone since 11 September 2017. All wild boars hunted in the infected area had to be safely disposed in rendering plants and tested for ASF. Carcasses were identified by a “seal”, collected in a plastic bag and carried to the nearest road (collection point) where dedicated vehicles transported them to the rendering plant. An official veterinarian took samples from the carcasses at the rendering plant.

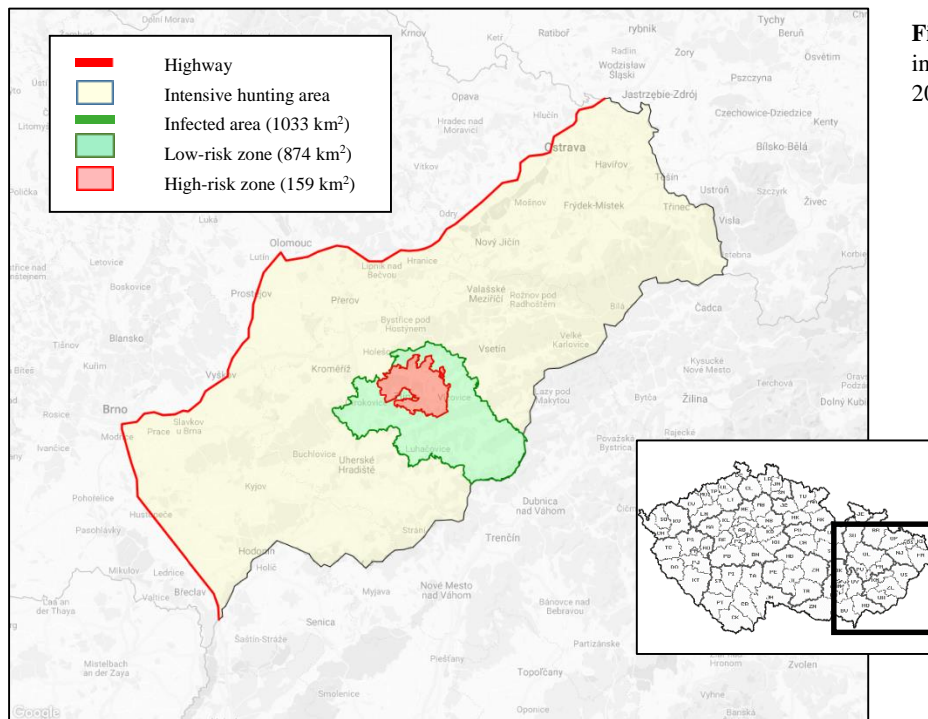


Figure 1: Risk-based ASF zoning in Zlín District, Czech Republic, 2017.

Aiming to reduce the number of pigs in the high-risk zone at the end of the epidemic phase of ASF infection, SVA cooperated with the Czech police. Hunting of wild boar in the high-risk zone by police snipers started on 16 October 2017. The employed snipers were trained on wild boar hunting and on biosecurity for hunting in the high-risk zone. A total of 157 wild boars were hunted and 8 of them were positive for ASF. All shot wild boars were collected by SVA, safely transported to the nearest road and then sampled at the rendering plant by the official veterinarian. There was a significant reduction in the number of pigs in the area after the end of the event. At the same time, ASF was found outside the core zone (Fig. 2).

Since carcasses of dead wild boar constitute the greatest risk for the spread of ASF in wild boar, the SVA ordered that the users of hunting grounds in the infected area must carry out an intensive search for wild boar carcasses from 22 March 2018 to 22 April 2018. There was a payment for searching and every carcass found. 56 carcasses were found during this action, 10 of them were ASF positive. All ASF positive carcasses were about 3-6 months old. Infection and subsequent death of these wild boars occurred at the end of 2017 or January 2018. Samples with positive results were sent to the European Reference Laboratory for ASF (EU RL ASF), Madrid, Spain. The laboratory confirmed presence of DNA of ASFV by PCR. Cultivation tests have shown that no live virus was present in the samples and did not pose any risk for the further spread of ASF.

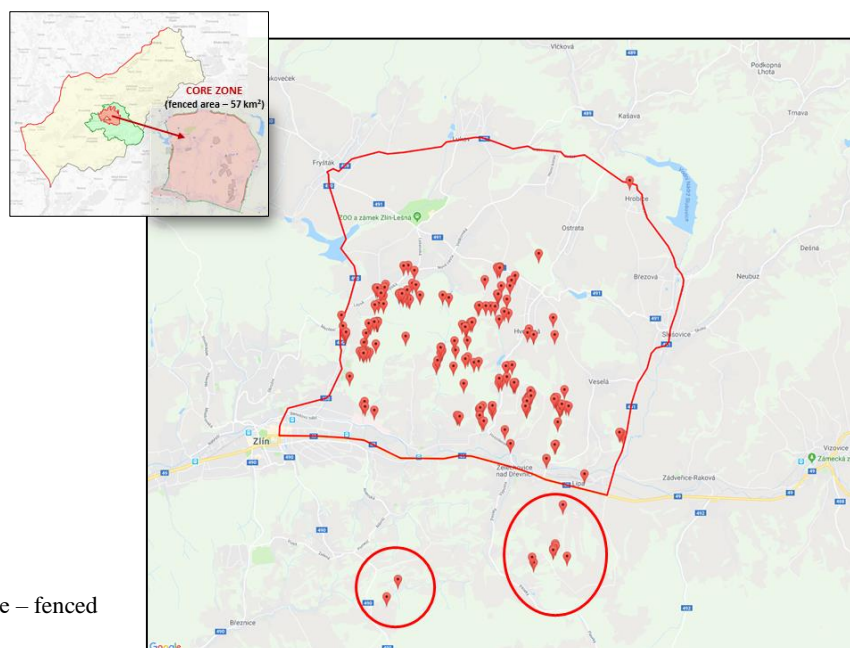


Figure 2: Positive findings “core zone – fenced area”, Czech Republic, 2017-2018

The total number of wild boar and domestic pigs tested for ASF from 26 June 2017 to 28 February 2019 is summarised in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Number of wild boar tested for ASF, Czech Republic, 26 June 2017 – 28 February 2019

Area	Found dead		Hunted	
	Tested	Positive	Tested	Positive
Infected zone (Zlín District as *Part II)	446	212	3 768	18
Other areas of the Zlín Region (Vsetín, Uherské Hradiště, Kroměříž Districts as **Part I)	155	0	11 762	0
Area with intensive hunting (without Part I and Part II)	517	0	12 234	0
Total	1 118	212	27 764	18

*PART II – area with ASF occurrence in wild boars

**PART I – risk area (buffer zone)

Table 3. Number of domestic pigs tested for ASF, Czech Republic, 26 June 2017 – 28 February, 2019

Total number of domestic pigs tested / positive	Part II*		Part I**	
	Active	Passive	Active	Passive
	337 / 0	109 / 0	757 / 0	1 383 / 0

*PART II – Infected zone (Zlín District)

**PART I – Other areas of the Zlín Region (Vsetín, Uherské Hradiště, Kroměříž Districts) – buffer zone

Implementation of measures for the prevention of ASF introduction to the domestic pig population was performed by SVA in parallel. Since July 2017, extraordinary official controls of holdings targeted on biosecurity were established. One of the main duties ordered in the infected area was to increase biosecurity and strictly avoid contact between wild boar and domestic pigs. Movement of pigs was allowed only after approval by the SVA. It was also forbidden to use straw and grass as feed and to use feed cereals from the last harvest from the infected area. It was ordered to keep pigs inside stables and use special working clothes and shoes. The ban on keeping pigs in backyard holdings was endorsed in the high-risk area. Municipalities in the whole Zlín Region had to perform census of all pig holdings till the end of January 2018. Duty to check all pig movements, system of early detection, regular visits and checks

by veterinary inspectors and system of testing of sick/dead animals in pig holdings also contributed to minimise the risk of ASF spread. Intensive communication campaigns were carried out through the media, information leaflets, training of hunters and with the support of private veterinarians. No case of ASF in wild boars outside the infected area was detected and no outbreak was detected in domestic pigs in the CR.

IV. Measures for Maintenance of freedom

In the whole territory of the Czech Republic, passive surveillance of found dead or car crashed (road kills) wild boars continues. Feeding of wild boar is forbidden in the whole territory of the Czech Republic with the exception of baiting for hunting. A surveillance program and preventive measures are applied to domestic pig holdings. Sick or dead pigs, for which ASF cannot be excluded on clinical grounds, are tested for ASF in accordance with the provisions set up in the OIE Terrestrial Manual. Farm official controls targeted on biosecurity continues. Ban on feeding of domestic pigs with kitchen and catering waste has been ordered.

Pigs and pig commodities are imported in accordance with the OIE Terrestrial Code requirements and also with the EU legislation. All live animals and commodities are imported in compliance with the Terrestrial Code (Chapter 5.6.) through approved border inspection posts. The list of BIP is published in Commission decision 2009/821/EC⁸.

According to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Scientific Opinion Czech Republic is free of *Ornithodoros* species, which are involved in the transmission of ASFV⁹. This species has never been reported to be present within the Czech Republic territory.

V. Conclusions

It was not possible to confirm the source of infection, however, according to genotyping it is the same strain circulating among Eastern European countries since 2007. Due to the distance from the nearest outbreak, it can be assumed that the transmission was by human activity.

Considering that:

- The veterinary measures prevented the spread of ASF in the wild boar population, and that is why all positive cases were detected in a small area (only 89 km²) in the Zlín District;
- There has been a significant reduction (almost complete depopulation) of the number of pigs in the area with ASF positive cases, leading to discontinuation of virus circulation;
- There has been no case of ASF in wild boar since the last confirmed case on 15 April 2018;
- The veterinary measures prevented the introduction of ASF into domestic pig holdings;
- Surveillance has been performed in accordance with Articles 15.1.27. to 15.1.32. of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* has been in place for at least the past 12 months;

The OIE Delegate of Czech Republic declares that the country complies with the requirements for a country free from infection with African swine fever in all suids as of 19 April 2019, in compliance with Chapter 1.6. and Articles 15.1.2., point 2 of 15.1.3. and 15.1.31, of the OIE *Terrestrial Code* and in accordance with the information provided in WAHIS.

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009D0821&qid=1555069877117&from=EN>

⁹ <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2010.1703>