4th Scientific Network for Risk Assessment in Animal Health - Subgroup on the animal health data reporting African Swine Fever (ASF)

11-12 March 2026
14:00-18:00; 09:00-13:00
Minutes agreed on 01st April 2026

Location: EFSA - Parma (Meeting Room M10B)/Web conference

Attendees:

- Network Participants:

Country	Member State Organisation
Croatia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Czechia	The State Veterinary Administration
Estonia	Estonian Agriculture and Food Board National Centre for Laboratory Research and Risk Assessment- LABRIS (NRL for ASF)
Germany	Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI)
Greece	Ministry of Rural Development and Food
Hungary	National Food Chain Safety Office
Italy	Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale Umbria e Marche Italian Reference Laboratory ASF – CSF National Reference Laboratory for swine fevers
Latvia	Food and Veterinary Service
Lithuania	State food and veterinary service Republic of Lithuania
Poland	National Veterinary Research Institute in Pulawy Mammal Research Institute, Polish Academy of Sciences
Romania	National Sanitary Veterinary and Food Safety Authority
Slovakia	State Veterinary and Food Institute, Veterinary Institute in Zvolen
Spain	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

- Other EU representatives:
  European Union Reference Laboratory for African Swine Fever, European Commission
- EFSA:
  BIOHAW Team Animal Health: MUR Lina, LIMA Eliana, BROGLIA Alessandro
- Hearing experts attending in their private capacity: STÅHL Karl, BOKLUND Anette, VERGNE Timothée, PODGORSKI Tomasz

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. ASF annual epidemiological report 2025 – discussion of comments and contextual information

EFSA presented the draft of the latest Annual Epidemiological Report on ASF, based on 2025 data reported by the Member States (MS) to EFSA. EFSA provided an overview of the results across all sections, including detailed tables with the laboratory results, maps and graphs. Members of the SubNetwork provided feedback on the results and suggested modifications. Members were also invited to provide contextual information on surveillance strategies in domestic pigs and wild boar to support the interpretation of observed figures and trends. Several MS reported a shift away from routine serology towards PCR-based surveillance in wild boar, with passive surveillance recognized as a more sensitive approach. The importance of extensive carcass search as a key pillar of the surveillance strategy was highlighted by some MS. In addition, there was a discussion with the Czech representative on the specific measures implemented in Czechia, which were reported to have successfully controlled the disease.

4. Presentations from MS

4.1 Italy's experience with ASF

The Italian representative presented an overview of ASF management and control in Italy. Italy has longstanding experience with ASF (genotypes I and II). Key pillars for the eradication in Sardinia were the removal of illegal free-ranging pigs and strong stakeholder engagement. On the mainland, control measures varied according to the local epidemiological context, including intensive carcass search, control of wild boar populations reinforcement of barriers and the use of traps to capture wild boar. The situation in northwest Italy remains more challenging, with outbreaks still ongoing.

4.2 Romania's experience with ASF

The Romanian representative outlined the epidemiological situation, surveillance and control approach for ASF in Romania. ASF has been present nationwide since 2021, with the whole country under restriction zone III. Some factors contributing to the spread of the disease are the wild boar movements, particularly along river corridors, and the high prevalence of extensive backyard farming. Several challenges were highlighted, including the high proportion of backyard holdings with

low levels of biosecurity. Despite the use of incentives, fatigue among hunters and farmers remains an issue. Wild boars continue to represent a persistent reservoir for the virus.

4.3 Spain's experience with ASF

The Spanish representative presented the recent ASF situation in Spain. The first cases of ASF in wild boar were detected in late 2025 in an area surrounding Barcelona. The introduction was considered most likely anthropogenic, potentially linked to contaminated food waste, while a laboratory escape was excluded. The definitive viral source has not been identified. A range of control measures were rapidly implemented, including zoning and the use of highways and fencing as physical barriers. Intensive carcass search was carried out using trained dogs. A core zone with no hunting was established, surrounded by a "white zone" where targeted depopulation was applied.

5. Molecular characterization of ASF outbreaks in Spain and existing gaps

The Head of the European Reference Laboratory for African Swine Fever presented the molecular characterization of the isolate involved in ASF outbreaks detected in Spain. The virus was identified as genotype II, consistent with the strains currently circulating in Europe. However, further genetic analysis (multi-gene sequencing and Whole Genome Sequence) revealed that the isolate does not cluster closely with recent European strains. The hypothesis that the virus escaped from a nearby laboratory was investigated and excluded based on molecular evidence. Despite detailed analyses, the exact geographical source of the virus could not be identified due to the important knowledge gaps, and limited coverage of the genetic characteristics of ASFV currently circulating.

The key message was that molecular data are essential to support epidemiological investigations but cannot be used in isolation. Improved genomic coverage, increased sequencing capacity and enhanced data sharing were identified as priorities to address current knowledge gaps.

6. Next risk factor report – topics overview

EFSA presented an overview of the next risk factor report, which will focus on several aspects of wild boar, including movement and behaviour and their role in ASF spread, occurrence and persistence. The objective of the report is to provide quantitative, evidence-based inputs to support surveillance design, risk assessment and modelling.

Analyses of wild boar movement and behaviour are based on large EU-wide telemetry datasets obtained from EUROBOAR. Results indicate that wild boar are generally sedentary, with short-range movements predominating, with a small proportion of animals showing longer movements that may drive rare long-distance spread. Movement and contact rates increase in autumn and winter, with sex, age and landscape structure influencing connectivity. Hunting may temporarily increase movement, although effects were reported to be short-lived.

Planned modelling work will analyse ASF occurrence and persistence at different spatial resolutions, combining positive and negative surveillance data to account for surveillance effort. Models will integrate ecological, anthropogenic and demographic drivers alongside wild boar density. Countries where ASF has circulated for several years and where spatially explicit data are available will be prioritised. Modelling of ASF spread will build on previous analyses, including work conducted in northern Italy, using longer time series and updated wild boar density estimates. The objective is to reassess the role of wild boar density and movement in explaining observed spatial spread patterns.

7. Carcass search and carcass dating – country experiences

A discussion took place on experiences and lessons learned related to wild boar carcass search and dating. Extensive carcass search was highlighted as a key pillar of surveillance, particularly in forested areas, with trained dogs considered the most effective method. Other approaches, such as drones, helicopters and foot patrols, were used mainly in open terrain but were described as costly and context dependent. Sustaining long-term engagement of hunters, volunteers and other stakeholders was identified as a common challenge, with incentives helping but not fully preventing fatigue.
Carcass dating was generally not applied as a routine tool but was considered most useful at the start of the epidemic, for estimating the timing of introduction and supporting disease freedom assessments. Methods ranged from detailed assessments by experienced teams to basic categorisation of carcasses. In several countries, carcass dating was mainly used for specific epidemiological investigations. Environmental conditions were reported to strongly influence decomposition rates and limit comparability. Although data were collected in some countries, analyses were typically conducted on a case-by-case basis.

8. EFSA-funded project – ENETWILD activities

EFSA presented the ENETwild project, with a focus on activities related to wild boar. The project represents the first EU-wide, harmonised collection of wildlife hunting bag data. It goes beyond single-country or single-study evidence by integrating harmonised data collected across multiple European sites. The project provides quantitative parameters to inform risk management decisions, such as surveillance

strategies, carcass search effort design, and epidemiological and spatial modelling. The recent work on wild boar movement and behaviour will be published shortly as an external report, and the main outcomes will feed into the ASF risk factor report to be published by the end of the year.