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# **The overview of the most relevant recommendations developed by SGE ASF GF-TADs**

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# Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe

## *The Objective (1)*

The initiative called Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe ('SGE ASF') was set up under the GF-TADs umbrella ***to build up a closer cooperation among countries affected by African swine fever (ASF)*** and thereby, address the disease in a more collaborative and harmonized manner across Europe.

The Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in Europe is a unique opportunity to engage affected countries into a fruitful regional dialogue and increased transparency. The GF-TADs offers the ideal framework to discuss common / harmonized mitigation measures based on scientific and technical grounds



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## *The Objective (2)*

The SGE main objective is to strengthen mid-term regional cooperation on ASF control through:

- Regular **exchange of information on the ASF situation and control measures** applied;
- Regular **review of national control strategies** by experts based on scientific risk assessments, experience and best practice in the region, to harmonizing control policies and building a science based regional control strategy;
- Collaboration on **laboratory diagnostics** (exchange of best practice on methodology, support and training, capacity building)
- Collaboration on **awareness raising** campaigns in the affected countries (exchange of best practice and communication tools).



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# EU international cooperation: GF-TADs (FAO/OIE):

**11 meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on ASF in the Baltic and Eastern Europe region since 2014:**

- Bern (22/09/14) - **Kick-off**
- Minsk (1-2/12/14) – **Wild boar management**
- Tallinn (11-12/02/15) – **backyard holding management**
- Moscow (15-16/03/16) - **reviewing the outcome of the ASF filed visits**
- Lisbon (19/09/16) - **ASF situation and planning actions**
- Vilnius (28-29/11/16) - **ASF situation and planning actions**
- Paris (23/05/17) - **ASF situation and planning actions**
- Moldova (20-21/09/17) – **awareness and communication**
- Kiev (22-23/03/2018) - **cross border cooperation addressing (legal and) irregular movements of pigs and their products**
- Paris (22/05/18) - **ASF situation and planning actions**
- Warsaw (September 2018) – **ASF epidemiology in wild boar population and in the environment**



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Recommendations we could group as follow:

1. For domestic pigs/farms/backyards
2. For wild boar management
3. Communication and awareness
4. Surveillance
5. Actions at the border

It is not easy to highlight group as most important one and depending on state of play of ASF in particular country, priorities could be different.  
Example – Latvia vs. Belgium.



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## 1. For domestic pigs/farms/backyards

- Management of biosecurity and backyard farms is a key topic that deserves specific attention
- Biosecurity is of crucial importance to prevent the entry and spread of ASF in pig holdings, both in the commercial and so called backyard pig sectors.
- There are minimum biosecurity measures that need to be and can easily be implemented even by smallholder pig owners, such as:
  - restricting access to visitors,
  - preventing contact between domestic pigs and wild boar,
  - using separate shoes and clothes when entering the pig house,
  - having disinfectants ready on site.
- Stamping out and carcass disposal principles (domestic pigs) - sections of a Contingency Plan covering the stamping out procedures should contain appropriate information.



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## 2. Wild boar management

- Management of wild boar needs strong cooperation among hunters, environmental authorities and veterinary services. Hunting should be conducted in a manner that avoids movement of wild boar, feeding of wild boar should in general be avoided or limited
- Biosecurity during hunting in infected areas is of paramount importance.
- Wild boar population reduction can facilitate ASF eradication
- Wild boar population reduction should be considered, in combination with other control measures, aimed at reducing ASF virus contamination of the environment.
- Carcass removal and safe disposal is an efficient disease management option.



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## 2. Wild boar management

- Hunting biosecurity and carcass disposal (wild boar)
  - Hunted wild boar should remain in the premises of the hunting ground until tested, only negative carcasses must be released. The carcasses should be individually identified.
  - offal from hunted wild boar should not be removed from the animal in the field, which should be brought to dedicated dressing facilities.
  - *removal of carcasses of dead wild boar should be a priority!*
- Countries review their wild boar management options in light of the experience in the Czech Republic (ban on hunting, active search of wild boar carcasses by authorized people only), in the surrounding higher risk area (such as active hunting and disposal of the carcasses without evisceration) and in the lower risk areas around (such as intensified hunting).



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## 2. Wild boar management

- The topic of the management of the wild boar population in the context of ASF infection was addressed and the progress on the GF-TADs Handbook on ASF was reviewed.
  - ***Wild boar management in ASF free areas*** – preventive and long term management of wild boar population aimed at reducing wild boar density.
  - ***Wild boar management in ASF infected areas*** - any attempt to hunt or depopulate when the first carcass is detected should be banned, while carcass removal should be carried out systematically, under strict biosecurity and by trained staff.

Management of the disease in the wild has to be set according to the different phases of the infection, which can be identified only through a continuous, accurate passive surveillance.



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### 3. Communication and awareness

- Precondition to achieve biosecurity is for the Veterinary Services to provide basic information to pig holders by way of appropriate communication campaigns
- Joint trainings to ensure that common disease prevention and eradication goals are understood and shared
- Targeted information campaigns should be organized in order to further increase awareness of travelers, pig owners/workers and hunters
- Tailor made information campaigns should be organized targeting:
  - Travelers moving in back and forth (such as tourists, workers and truck drivers) at border checkpoints.
  - Border Inspection posts, or relevant services, and customs officials in order to promote understanding of the risks related to ASF.



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## 4. Surveillance

- Passive surveillance is the most effective way of detecting the presence of the disease and has a key role in early detection of ASF. Surveillance aimed at early detecting the presence of the disease should not be based on serology!
- National Expert Groups advising the Veterinary Services on ASF policy, wild boar management and surveillance strategies be in place and regularly meet.
- Laboratory diagnostics and capability
- Countries implement passive surveillance on ASF based on PCR; active surveillance should come into play in a second instance only.



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## 5. Actions at the border

- Coordinated border management among border inspection posts and customs should be encouraged to tighten the cooperation across the border and within the country.
- Specific visible tools and procedures should be in place at border checkpoints in order to screen the required number of travelers and consignments to fight/control illegal movements. In addition to awareness campaigns, amnesty bins should be displayed at borders as incentive measures to get rid of at risk products. A system for recovering costs or setting deterrent fines should be in place.
- In order to optimize the use of available resources, risk analysis and risk profiling for borders control personal luggage and vehicles should be carried out
- Empty animal trucks should be disinfected according to a well-defined procedures, using disinfectants recommended by OIE and the competent authorities should be informed in order to enhance cross border coordination on these procedures. The disinfection procedure can take place in a different location other than the border check point or the edge of the restricted area



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## General conclusions:

- In principle, all GF-TAD recommendations are equally important and based on years of experience in the affected countries.
- Depending on the stage of the disease development and structure of pig/wildboar sector, the importance of priorities for each country may vary.
- Recommendations highlights important subjects such as biosecurity, awareness campaigns, border control to reduce risks of introduction of ASF virus.
- Concerning wild boar management, here is a good practices for non-infected countries and newly infected countries.
- Based on experience of Latvia, we lack scenarios for way out in case of persistent infection in wild boar for years and how to reduce or keep wild boar population as low as possible



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## General conclusions:

- Based on our experience, minimum biosecurity requirements is not enough to stop introduction of virus in domestic pigs, especially in back yards (regional traditions). Backyards and ASF is not compatible.
- Importance of border control is well indicated in recommendations. It is highest priority for veterinary services, but not for custom and borderguards. Lack of resources lead to formal checks on personal luggage. Tray by yourself to bring sausage form third countries – easy.
- Passive surveillane as the best tool for early detection of virus in wild boar and domestic pigs are well described in Recommendations and works well, but not everywhere.



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Thank you for your attention!