Contents

BLUETONGUE IN GREECE
Typing of virus strains isolated in 1998-1999

Extract from an e-mail received on 5 March 2000 from Dr Vasilios Stylas, Head, Animal Health Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Athens:

End of previous report period: 12 January 2000 (see *Disease Information*, **13** [3], 9, dated 21 January 2000).
End of this report period: 3 March 2000.

Laboratory procedures

The Laboratory of Virology, Athens, carried out all preliminary virus isolation procedures in September and October 1999 and a preliminary typing in November 1999. Provisional results were reported to the SVC[1] in December 1999.

Definitive typing was obtained by the Laboratory of Arbovirology, Pirbright, United Kingdom, from 13 to 28 February 2000.

Results of typing of bluetongue virus strains isolated in Greece in 1998 and 1999

Origin of sample (Prefecture – Region)	Nature of sample	Bluetongue virus type	
		1998	1999
Chalkidiki	virus	no disease	9
Dodekanissa - Kos	virus + sera	9	?
Dodekanissa - Rhodos	virus + sera	9	4 + ?
Drama	sera	no disease	9
Evia	sera	no disease	9
Evros (North West)	sera	no disease	9
Evros (South East)	virus	no disease	4
Larissa	sera	no disease	9
Lesvos	virus + sera	no disease	9 + 4 + ?
Pieria	virus	no disease	4 (probably)
Rodopi	sera	no disease	9
Samos	virus + sera	9	?
Serres	sera	no disease	9

(?) = bluetongue virus type not yet identified. Possibly type 16 or mixture of two types.

Discussion

A. General comments relating to the overall situation

In the light of the typing results presented above, the following points emerge:

- The epizootic of bluetongue in Greece in the summer of 1999 was due to at least two independent and simultaneous primary incursions, one of bluetongue virus (BTV) type 4 from the East and one of BTV type 9 from the North.
- However, the case of Lesvos, in 1999, and of Dodecanese, in 1998 and 1999, suggest that the true source of infection can always be traced back to the East.
- In the case of south-eastern Evros, and to a lesser extent Rhodes and Lesvos, the isolated field strain may actually be a live vaccine strain, which is known to have been used in the summer of 1999 just across the border.
- In the case of the Dodecanese, it became evident that different BTV types do not afford cross-protection and that the introduction of a new type into a livestock population naïve to this particular type is likely to produce a new epizootic.
- Finally, mixed infections and BTV types as yet unidentified suggest that more types, unknown to date, are likely to be circulating in the region and may give rise to new epizootics in future.

B. Specific comments relating to Rhodes, Dodecanese

One particular case in Rhodes, Dodecanese, deserves special mention and in-depth research.

The case involved a herd of bovines, which were infected in 1998 with BTV type 9 and were known to have been seropositive since then without any apparent clinical signs or any loss of production or reproductive activity.

In the summer of 1999, massive deaths were recorded in the same herd following a short period of acute clinical signs involving the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.

The results of laboratory tests did not allow a definitive diagnosis, but BTV type 4 was isolated from the spleen of dead animals and, accordingly, bluetongue was pronounced to be the cause of death.

This scenario suggests that, unlikely as it may appear on the basis of current knowledge, the animals may have died:

- either as a result of some sort of hypersensitive allergic reaction, caused by subsequent exposure to heterologous antigens of different BTV types,
- or as a result of a BTV type 4 live vaccine strain which reverted to virulence.

Predisposing individual factors, as yet undetermined, may have contributed. However, the potentially adverse effects of overlapping infection by different BTV types cannot be ruled out and, therefore, warrant further and urgent investigation.

(1) SVC: Standing Veterinary Committee of the European Union.

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NEW WORLD SCREWWORM (*COCHLIOMYIA HOMINIVORAX*) IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA in an imported horse

EMERGENCY REPORT

Text of a fax received on 6 March 2000 from Dr Alfonso Torres, Deputy Administrator, Veterinary Services, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC:

Report date: 6 March 2000.

Nature of diagnosis: suspicion and laboratory diagnosis.
Date of initial detection of animal health incident: 2 March 2000.
Estimated date of first infection: 18 February 2000.

Outbreaks:

Location	No. of outbreaks
West Palm Beach, State of Florida	1

Description of affected population: a four-year-old chestnut thoroughbred gelding.

Total number of animals in the outbreak:

species	*susceptible*	*cases*	*deaths*	*destroyed*	*slaughtered*
equ	17	1	0	0	0

Source of agent / origin of infection: foreign introduction is supposed.

History:

- On 27 February 2000, a shipment of 17 horses from a South American country arrived at Miami, Florida.
- On 29 February, 16 of the 17 horses were released from quarantine.
- On 1 March, the one remaining horse was released from quarantine.
- On 2 March, a private practitioner performed a physical examination of the subject horse, and reported minor discharge from the prepuce, no swelling and a bad odour. The private practitioner collected 50-100 larvae from the area of the distal penis of the subject horse, and contacted the USDA-APHIS(1) Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD).
- On 3 March, the FADD submitted samples of larvae from the subject horse to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL), Ames, Iowa, and appropriately treated the subject horse and premises.
- On 4 March, NVSL confirmed that the larvae samples from the subject horse were screwworm larvae in the third instar stage.
- An FADD has reexamined one of the remaining 16 horses of the 27 February shipment from South America, found the animal to be free of larvae, and nonetheless, appropriately treated the horse and its stall as a precautionary measure.
- The Veterinary Services are locating the remaining 15 horses of the original 27 February shipment from South America, for reexamination and appropriate treatment.
- The Veterinary Services are actively increasing screwworm surveillance in selected geographic areas, and is offering technical assistance to States.

(1) USDA-APHIS: United States Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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CLASSICAL SWINE FEVER IN THAILAND

(***Date of last previously reported outbreak:*** 1996).

EMERGENCY REPORT

Extract from the monthly report of Thailand for December 1999, received from Dr Suwithaya Pollarp, Director General, Department of Livestock Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Bangkok:

Number of outbreaks in December 1999 : nine (9).

Total number of animals in the outbreaks:

species	***susceptible***	***cases***	***deaths***	***destroyed***	***slaughtered***
sui	5,777	379	136	0	0

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