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Contagious Lumpy Skin Disease Hits Cattle in Serbia

Report Categories:

Agricultural Situation

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Report Highlights:

On June 8, Serbia reported to the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) its first occurrence of lumpy skin disease in the country which was detected on June 4 by the Veterinary Institute Kraljevo on several small farms in South Serbia close to the border with Macedonia. On June 23th the European Commission donated 50,000 doses of lumpy skin disease vaccine for cattle in Serbia. On June 24, a vaccination program in the most vulnerable areas such as Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Bujanovac in the South Serbia was initiated. An additional 400,000 doses of vaccines against lumpy skin disease arrived in Serbia on June 27. According to the Serbian Veterinary Directorate, all live cattle in Serbia will be vaccinated. It is estimated that approximately 5,000-6,000 cows could become infected which would have to be culled. Thus, the minimum loss for the country would be approximately EUR 7-9 million.

General Information:

On June 8, Serbia reported to the World Animal Health Organization (OIE) http://www.oie.int/wahis_2/public/wahid.php/Reviewreport/Review?page_refer=MapFullEventReport&reportid=20284 its first occurrence of lumpy skin disease in the country which was detected on June 4 by the Veterinary Institute Kraljevo on several small farms in South Serbia close to the border with Macedonia. They found it had already begun to spread towards central Serbia. Consequently, Serbia decided to prohibit the import and movement of cattle, beef meat and suspicious animal products which might contain non heat treated or frozen beef from Macedonia, Bulgaria, Greece or Turkey. Serbia also implemented domestic biosecurity measures (i.e. preventing the movement of livestock and vehicles from the affected areas that might carry live vectors such as flies, mosquitoes, etc.; introducing mitigation measures to protect animals from insects; disinfecting vehicles prior to and after movements; avoiding contact between animals from different herds such as on common pastures, and the sharing of animals, tools, vehicles, personnel with other farms). A vaccination program against the disease will also be implemented. The illness spreads quickly as it is transmitted by mosquitoes and other tiny insects. However, it is not dangerous to humans. The disease causes damage to hides, loss of milk and beef production, abortions in females and sterility in bulls.

The economic losses in herds with this disease are very severe. More than 7,000 cows have been culled in Bulgaria and Greece since the beginning of 2016. According to the latest data published by the Macedonian Food and Veterinary Agency, 34 hotspots in 14 municipalities (mainly in the country's eastern region) have been registered as being affected by the disease. The Serbian Veterinary Directorate estimates that approximately 5,000-6,000 cows could become infected which would have to be culled. Thus, the minimum loss for the country would be approximately EUR 7-9 million (EUR 1,500 per cow). On June 18 and 19, specialized teams conducted spraying in the most endangered municipalities of Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Bujanovac in South Serbia, to eliminate insects such as mosquitoes, flies and ticks that are the main carriers of lumpy skin disease (LSD) in cattle. The effort was financed by the city of Novi Sad with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection in accordance with guidance from the Government's Body for Coordination.

On June 23, 50,000 doses of vaccines against lumpy skin disease were donated by the European Commission (EC) to Serbia. Vaccination of cattle began on June 24 in the most vulnerable areas, Surdulica, Bosilegrad and Bujanovac. According to Dragan Glamočić, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Agriculture and the Head of the Government's Body for Coordination on Measures to Prevent, Control, and Eradicate Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), an additional 400,000 doses of vaccines against lumpy skin disease arrived to Serbia on June 27. The Serbian Government was forced to procure the vaccines following the decision to vaccinate all cattle in Serbia, as the disease is spreading fast and is very difficult to contain. Mr. Glamočić explained that in herds where vaccination is not carried out and the disease appears in only one head, all cattle must be euthanized, and that in those herds where vaccination is carried out, only cattle showing signs of disease will need to be euthanized.

The Serbian Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection has declared the area of Pčinj administrative district (with seat in Vranje) as an area affected with lumpy skin disease (LSD). On June 15, the EU banned imports of cattle, beef meat and products from the Pčinj district in south Serbia, while imports from other parts of Serbia have not been affected. At the same time, Bosnia-Herzegovina

has banned imports of live cattle, beef meat and products from the entire territory of Serbia, while Montenegro and Macedonia have banned imports just from the Pčinj district. Serbia earlier banned the import and transit of live cattle and beef meat and products from Turkey, Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Greece over LSD, although they remain concerned that cattle smuggling could undermine these measures. Lumpy skin disease is not transmittable to humans, and there is no danger to human health.