

African swine fever- recent research advances and strategies to combat the disease in Europe

COST Action CA15116: Understanding and combating
African Swine Fever in Europe (ASF-STOP)



6-8 December 2016
Puławy, Poland

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This Proceedings are based upon work from COST Action (CA15116-
Understanding and combating African Swine Fever in Europe (ASF-STOP),
supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology)

The wild boars population characteristics in the Republic of Serbia

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Keywords: wild boars, hunting ground, Serbia.

In the Republic of Serbia, a certain number of wild boars is controlled and reared on enclosed hunting grounds, while a number of free-ranging population is mainly unknown. In some regions, especially near the waterways, domestic pigs are kept outdoors on the pasture, which provides favourable conditions for disease transmission. The aim of this research was to present the available data about the population characteristics of wild boars in the Republic of Serbia. According to available data, in the Republic of Serbia the population of wild boars was approximately estimated on 30.000,00 heads and the population density ranges from a minimum of 0.2/km² to over 20/km². In the country there are about 300 hunting grounds with wild boars and their surface ranges from 20 to 1000 km². There are 28 fenced hunting areas which encompass a total surface of 218km². The hunting grounds are managed by two public enterprises, four National parks in which hunting is allowed and 5 hunting grounds managed by Ministry of Defence. In the south of the country (Vojvodina Province), there is one large public enterprise with 17 hunting grounds, one National park (Fruska gora), one private hunting ground and in total 86 hunting associations. In central part of the country (central Serbia) there is one large public enterprise with 44 hunting grounds, and in total 156 hunting associations. Officially, the hunting season last for all wild boars categories from 1st July to 31st December. Generally, the population of wild boars in an enclosed hunting grounds is controlled while the number of free-ranging population is mainly unknown. One of the characteristics of outdoor swine production in some regions of Serbia is raising free-roaming domestic pigs, where they share forest habitat with wild boar population. It can be assumed that direct contacts between wild boars and domestic pigs kept in outdoor farms occur occasionally. In some regions, especially near the river banks, domestic pigs are kept outdoors on the pasture, which provides favourable conditions for infection transmission. Domestic pigs move freely in the woods, thus getting in contact with wild boars. However, after summer pasture, domestic pigs are returning into the pens. It is especially important that owners of the free-roaming animals in the same time have backyard pigs. Considering the existence of free-roaming domestic pigs located in forest habitat, the control of wild boars population is very important. The inveterate tradition to keep domestic pigs at free range and the consequent contacts with the wild boars could be in the future considered the major cause of outbreaks and disease persistence. Avoiding close contact between wild boars and domestic animals is of logical importance in disease control and eradication programmes. Having in mind this fact, the special attention should be given to active surveillance of wild boars population in the areas where close contact with domestic swine is possible. The measures should include the serological monitoring of wild boars and free-roaming domestic swine, even the prohibition of extensive grazing, pathological examination of the trunci deriving from shot wild boars. It is important to improve surveillance strategies for pathogens shared between wildlife and domestic animals and to increase disease awareness of hunters, farmers and veterinary practitioners.

Acknowledgements: This paper is a result of the research within the project TR 31084, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia.