



International Animal Health Division

International Animal Disease Monitoring

Preliminary Outbreak Assessment



Ref: VITT 1200/BT - TUNISIA

Date: 29 November 2006

Bluetongue in Tunisia

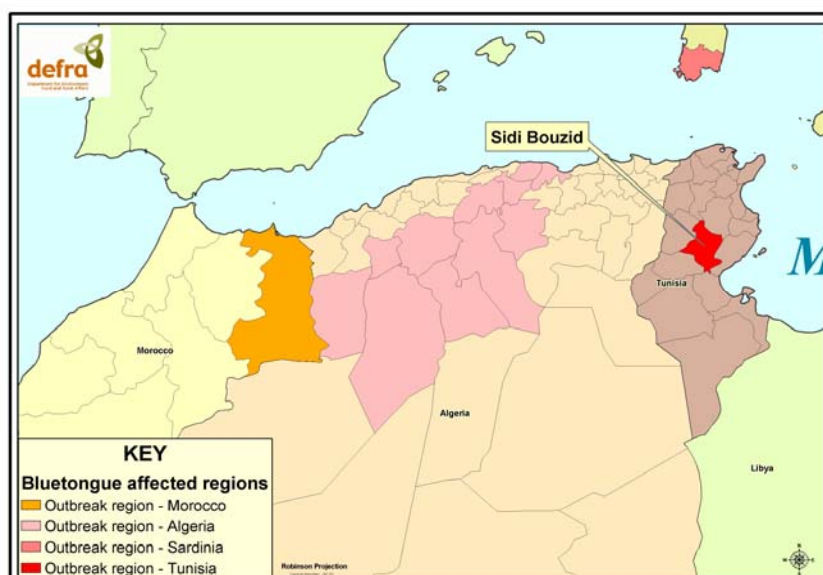
Note: Defra's International Animal Health Division (IAHD) monitors outbreaks of high impact diseases around the world. Bluetongue (BT) is among those diseases of major concern.

Disease Report

Tunisia has reported outbreaks of bluetongue (BT) in sheep in Sidi Bouzid governorate (see map). The outbreaks started on 23 October 2006 and were confirmed as bluetongue virus BTV 1 on 27 November 2006 (OIE, 2006). This is the first time that this strain of BTV has been found in Tunisia. The last outbreak of BT in Tunisia reported to the OIE was in 2002.

Situation Assessment

There have been a number of bluetongue BTV 1 outbreaks in sheep in countries within the western Mediterranean region in recent months. These have affected parts of Algeria, Morocco and Sardinia in Italy.



Imports of live ruminants and genetic material are not currently allowed into the UK and EU from Tunisia. Meat and other products are also not allowed to be imported but would not pose a risk of BT transmission.

Conclusion

It is unclear from the available evidence how BTV 1 has spread across the Maghreb and into Sardinia but it seems likely that windborne infected *Culicoides* have been involved. Based on the disease report and situation assessment, the likelihood of the introduction of this disease into the UK before and after this outbreak is considered negligible. Currently, IAHD does not intend to carry out and publish a full risk assessment on this outbreak but will continue to monitor developments and re-assess the situation.

References

OIE, (2006). Bluetongue in Tunisia. OIE Alert message 061129TUN . Received by e-mail Wednesday 29/11/2006.