



## Aujeszky's Disease in the European Union

**Note:** Defra's Global Animal Health (GAH) monitors outbreaks of high impact diseases around the world and any significant epidemiological or legislative changes with regards to other notifiable diseases. **Aujeszky's Disease (AD)** is among those diseases.

### Introduction

Currently our risk-based import testing policy states that the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, parts of France, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden are free of AD and therefore testing is not required. Animals from other countries (not AD-free) are tested, as well as spot checks on other consignments.

There is concern that more pigs may now be imported into the UK for fattening from other EU MSs. It has been questioned if these changes to the rules on AD status will increase the risk that the disease may be introduced into GB from countries where AD is endemic but also from Member States which are recognised as free of AD.

### Aujeszky's Disease in the EU

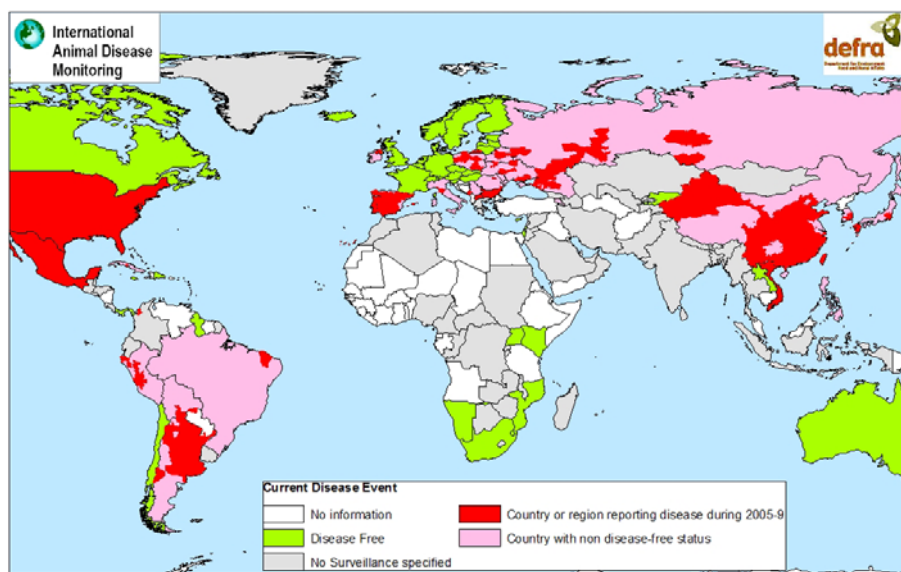
Aujeszky's Disease (AD) is a notifiable disease of pigs, caused by a Herpes virus infection. The disease cycles in breeding herds and can spread to young pigs in finishing herds. The disease is present in many countries worldwide (see Map 1), but recently, countries in the EU are reporting to be either already or soon-to-be disease free.

The improvement in the situation in the EU, indicated in Map 2, is in accordance with EC Directive 2008/988 and previous associated decisions (European Commission 2008). The categories for disease status include those countries which are disease free and those where an approved disease control programme is in place and is leading to an advanced stage of AD eradication. Otherwise a country has reported disease or has not

been given disease-freedom status according to the EU. The map applies to countries with EU membership only.

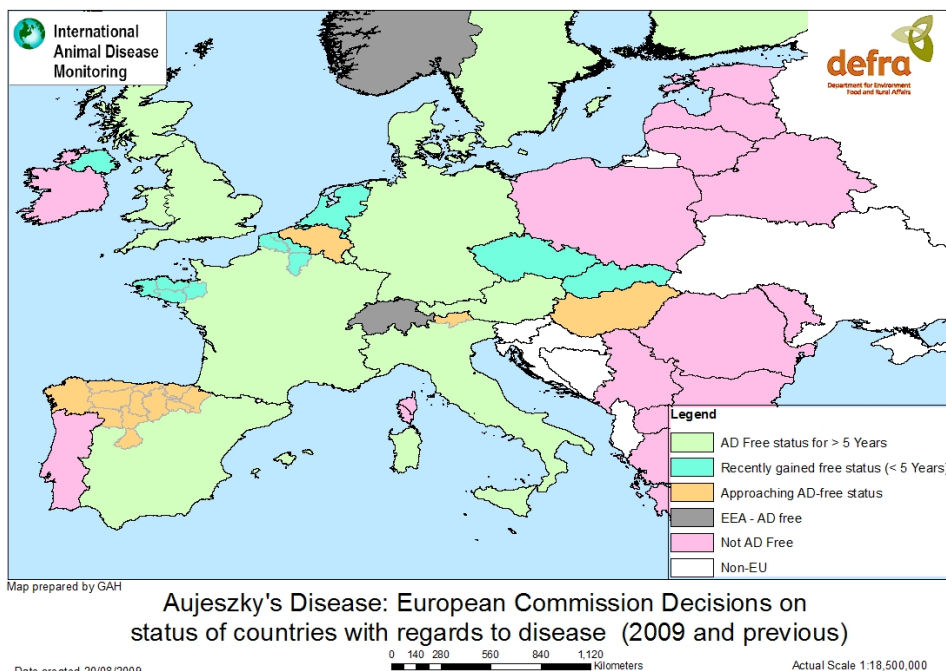
In late 2008, the European Commission listed France and the Netherlands with disease free status and Hungary with approved control programme status (European Commission, 2008).

We understand the European Commission are currently reviewing the surveillance programmes and criteria for listing a country free from AD. The region of Northern Ireland considers that it is at an advanced stage of AD eradication and on 14 May 2009 submitted an application for EU approval of their eradication plan to the Commission, which was approved unanimously on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009 (European Commission, 2009). The Republic of Ireland (RoI) also intends to seek EU approval for their eradication plan from the Commission. At



Aujeszky's Disease: Disease between 2005 and 2009  
Map prepared by GAH  
0 1,000 2,000 4,000 6,000 8,000 Kilometers  
Actual Scale 1:100,000,000

present, surveillance programmes are also in place in Northern Italy (region of Bolzano), regions of Northern Spain, Hungary and Belgium.



Current trade regulations state that pigs can be dispatched to another Member State if they meet certain guarantees, in agreement with Decision 2008/185/EC (European Commission 2008a). The decision lays down additional guarantees if the destination country is AD-free or has an approved control programme. Where pigs are exported to GB for breeding or production from other Member States which are not free of AD, additional conditions regarding the Member State or region of origin, the holding of origin or the pigs themselves must be met and

AD testing of the pigs is required. The pigs must be free of clinical signs of disease and the holding of origin must have AD monitoring and eradication measures in place. In case of breeding pigs, serological surveillance must be carried out and individual pigs being consigned are tested.

## Situation Assessment

According to the data entered into the Animal Health Import Risk Management System and also into TRACES, the EU electronic trade notification system, during 2008 there were over 43,000 live pigs exported to the UK **for fattening** in 116 consignments (see Tables A and B below).

Tables: Numbers of animals (A) or Numbers of consignments (B) of live animals and germplasm destined for GB, according to use and country of origin:

Table A

Country	For Slaughter	Breeding / Fattening	Semen
Non-EU		233	69
Austria		1	
Denmark		560	2528
France		34	
Ireland N	18086	3688	
Ireland S	2587	38381	12
Netherlands			441
Portugal		2	
Sweden		164	

Table B

Country	For Slaughter	Breeding / Fattening	Semen
Non-EU		4	2
Austria		1	
Denmark		26	93
France		3	
Ireland N	118	9	
Ireland S	4	71	1
Netherlands			17
Portugal		2	
Sweden		23	

The vast majority of these (61% consignments, containing roughly 80% of all pigs) were from the RoI. Tests for AD were conducted on three out of four of the Third Country consignments, one each of those from Portugal and Sweden and over 2,500 pigs from the RoI. There were 112 consignments of semen, the

majority from Denmark, which is AD free. No pigs tested were found to have AD. There have been no disease reports of AD from imported animals. The only disease investigations carried out in 2008 were on non-negative boar serology collected in the slaughter house survey and in all cases, clinical and documentary investigations on the farm of origin concluded the investigations could be negated.

On the other hand, while a large volume of pig movements occur from Northern Ireland to GB, the majority (over 80% animals or 93% of consignments) of animals are destined for slaughter. None of the pigs apparently destined for fattening from Northern Ireland were tested. Those boars destined for slaughter would have been tested under the Boar Serum Survey carried out at slaughter houses.

GB has been officially AD free since 1991 (last case in 1989) and despite continuing imports of pigs for breeding, production and slaughter, including some pigs from MSs with endemic AD (see Table above), disease has not been introduced to GB. While pigs sent to slaughter upon entry into GB do not have to be tested under EU rules, serological surveillance is carried out on boars at slaughter houses as an additional measure and those pigs that enter GB for breeding or production are randomly tested. No such tests conducted during 2008 detected any positive cases. AD is carried in live animals, semen, fomites and by the aerosol route; wind-borne infection can occur in areas where there is a high density of pigs and farms. AD was reported to spread 15–40 km from northern Germany to Denmark and, in one case, 80 km (Christiansen and others, 1990). However there are no reports of high concentrations of disease in the EU, so this is a negligible risk of disease introduction.

The epidemiological situation suggests that for AD to enter the GB pig population, the most likely route would be via live pigs or semen. A live animal introduction seems the most likely source, possibly from a Member State considered free but where disease has been reintroduced but not detected at the time of export. There is always a negligible risk that any disease may be introduced by an animal from a disease-free region, where infection was notified after the movement took place. This is a risk that exists for all animal diseases and is considered acceptable as it is not high enough to warrant the added cost of extra testing and guarantees.

## References

- European Commission (2008) Commission Decision 2008/988/EC of 17 December 2008 amending Decision 2008/185/EC as regards the inclusion of the Netherlands in the list of Member States free of Aujeszky's disease and of Hungary in the list of Member States where an approved national control programme for that disease is in place. Official Journal of the European Union. L 352/52.
- European Commission (2008a) Commission Decision 2008/185/EC of 21 February 2008 on additional guarantees in intra-Community trade of pigs relating to Aujeszky's disease and criteria to provide information on this disease. Official Journal of the European Union. L 59/19.
- European Commission (2009) Commission Decision 2009/621/EC of 20 August 2009 amending decision 2008/185/EC as regards the inclusion of Northern Ireland in the list of regions where an approved national control programme for Aujeszky's disease is in place. Official Journal of the European Union. L 217/5.
- Christensen LS, Mousing J, Mortensen S, Soerensen KJ, Strandbygaard SB, Henriksen CA, and Andersen JB. (1990) Evidence of long distance airborne transmission of Aujeszky's disease (pseudorabies) virus The Veterinary Record, 127: 471-474.