



Standing Group of Experts on LSD in South-East Europe under the GF-TADs umbrella

Tenth meeting (SGE LSD10) **14 January 2021** **Teleconference**

REPORT

Summary

Due to the sanitary situation of the COVID-19, the tenth meeting of the standing group of experts on lumpy skin disease (SGE LSD10), initially planned in Israel, took place as a teleconference on 14 January 2021. Starting with this meeting, the functions of the Secretariat of the SGE LSD were transferred to the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Nur-Sultan.

The meeting started with informing the participating countries on LSD epidemiological situation in Europe, Asia, and Africa in 2020, and more detailed information on LSD epidemiological situation in Europe and neighbouring areas, occurrence and vaccination, active and passive surveillance, LSD vaccination cessation strategy, as well as LSD vaccine control were presented by the DG SANTE, EFSA and EURL, respectively. The participating countries presented their national epidemiological situation regarding LSD, an update on the last outbreak occurrence, the type of vaccination in place, the post-vaccination surveillance, and the disease preparedness, as well as plans for 2021 regarding vaccination and surveillance.

Minutes

Participants

14 of 23 current member countries of the SGE LSD, 1 new member of the SGE LSD (Kyrgyzstan), the observer countries (Belgium, Italy, and Portugal), as well as the representatives of FAO, European Commission (DG SANTE), EFSA, and the EU Reference Laboratory for Capripox Viruses.

Objectives of the meeting

The main objectives of the SGE LSD10 were to update on the epidemiological situation in each member countries, the LSD vaccination and surveillance strategies for 2021, as well as the LSD vaccination cessation strategy.

Opening remarks

Dr Bernard Van Goethem, President of the GF-TADs Europe and chair of the SGE LSD thanked all to be appointed as the President on the next period to coordinate the eradication TADs. He also welcomed the participants and recalled that the main objective of this meeting was to achieve progress on the vaccination exit strategy. He informed that due to the COVID's restriction the meeting has not been able to be conducted in Israel and hopes that the OIE Delegate of Israel would be happy to host the event next time. He rejoiced that no outbreak had been notified until that day in 2021 in EU countries. Due that our all attention should be concentrated on neighboring countries of EU on East part to prevent a spreading of disease and help them in the eradication. He introduced the agenda of this meeting where have different topics from countries and experts.

Dr. Roberto A. Balbo has announced that SGE for LSD will be taken by Nur-Sultan office of OIE as the secretariat and other 2 SGEs for Rabies and ASF are splitted up between Moscow and Brussels offices accordingly. He has given the floor to lead this meeting Dr. Mereke Taitubayev who thanked him and President for this opportunity and hoped that all these activities helped countries to eradicate the LSD in future.

Updates on the LSD situation in 2020 by the member countries of the SGE LSD

The countries that had provided presentations are available [here](#).

[Albania](#)

No outbreak reported in 2020, after 5 consecutive years of vaccination with homologous vaccine. Reported that vaccinations with approved vaccine would end in January 2021 and that they were maintaining surveillance. Expressed interest in receiving support for surveillance from the European Union. Passive surveillance is implemented throughout the country.

[Armenia](#)

The last LSD outbreak was confirmed in December 2015. Vaccination is performed with a heterologous vaccine produced in Russia reaching 61% vaccination coverage. Vaccination will continue in 2021.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Even if there was never an outbreak of LSD in Bosnia and Herzegovina, preventive vaccination was performed in 2017 and 2018. Vaccination ceases in 2019. Only clinic surveillance activities were implemented in 2020. It is planned to continue with the surveillance in 2021.

[Bulgaria](#)

The last LSD outbreak in Bulgaria was in 2016. Vaccination remained mandatory in the whole country in 2020, resulting in an 84% vaccination coverage. Vaccine supply has already been secured in 2021 included, with a view to continue vaccination and surveillance.

Greece

There was no LSD outbreak since August 2017. Vaccination is mandatory throughout the whole country. The vaccination campaign in 2020 with homologous live vaccines. Passive and active surveillance is implemented, active clinical surveillance in the framework of other programmes and in slaughterhouses. Vaccination in 2021 will continue.

Hungary

No outbreak, no vaccination, vaccines in stock. Surveillance is being implemented.

Israel

Vaccination with a Homologous vaccine has been made mandatory since August (it was only voluntary before). Reaching 61% vaccination coverage in 2020 of 60%. Mandatory vaccination should continue in 2021. Use of drones for clinic surveillance.

Kazakhstan

There was no outbreak in 2019 (last one in 2016).

Moldova

No LSD outbreak was never confirmed in Moldova. Dispose of a contingency plan. Vaccination currently prohibited.

Montenegro

The last LSD outbreak in Montenegro dates back to October 2016. Vaccination from 2016 to 2019. Having a surveillance plan financed by the European Union, in 2021 no vaccination will be carried out and will continue with the surveillance plan

Romania

No LSD outbreaks, and no vaccination. Surveillance (passive and active in case of risk) is implemented and ongoing with no suspicion so far. Continuation in 2021.

Serbia

No LSD outbreak in 2020 (last one in October 2016). Vaccination with a homologous vaccine was mandatory, only calves older than 6 months and imported cattle. In 2021 surveillance

Slovenia

LSD was never detected in Slovenia. Clinical surveillance was implemented. No vaccination in 2021.

Turkey

5 LSD outbreaks have been confirmed in 2020, all in Anatolia) and none in the Thrace region. Vaccination is mandatory in the whole country with a heterologous vaccine (used in cattle with 5 times the sheep dose).

In 2021, including the vaccination of cattle with homologous vaccine provided by the EU in the Thrace region in the framework of an EU funded project and with a heterologous vaccine in Anatolia.

Experts presentations

LSD Notifications – epidemiological situation in Europe, Asia, and Africa in 2020 –

Lina Awada Veterinary epidemiologist, WAHIAD

LSD in South, East, and Southeast Asia (C. Holley, OIE ASIA)

LSD situation in Africa in 2020

The disease has been present in many African countries for many years. No LSD data collected through six-monthly reports this year due to the transition from WAHIS to the OIE WAHIS. Only immediate notifications & follow-up reports were provided for exceptional epidemiological events. The LSD situation was quite stable in the region, only one event for recurrence for LSD was notified by the Veterinary Services of Djibouti.

LSD situation in Asia in 2020

During the summer, the LSD continued its spread across continental Asia with huge numbers of notifications. Some Asian countries faced the LSD first occurrence, particularly Nepal, Chinese Taipei, Eastern Russia (Khabarovsk Krai), Bhutan, Hong Kong (SAR-PRC), Vietnam, Myanmar. LSD outbreaks were also notified by Syria and China (People's Rep. of). The vaccination had been implemented in some areas, however sourcing and delivering vaccines was challenging in some OIE Members and had been exacerbated due to COVID-19.

LSD situation in Europe in 2020

The region demonstrated a positive progress on LSD control and follow up. Only one event for recurrence for LSD was notified by Russia (Altai Krai). The LSD preventive vaccination had been continued that year in Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and Turkey. More detailed information is presented below.

FAO activities on LSD in Europe and Central Asia (D. Beltran Alcrudo, FAO)

The speaker updated participants on the various activities on LSD implemented by FAO in the region over the past year. The Organization has closely followed the spread and epidemiology of disease Through regular risk assessments and situation updates, the last being dedicated to the "[Introduction and spread of lumpy skin disease in South, East and Southeast Asia](#)".

FAO has also produced a [field manual for field veterinarians](#) and paraprofessionals, which has already translated into nine languages, as well as a set of [practical guidelines and templates](#) for veterinary services, and tools to [predict the spatial risk](#) or to [assess the cost](#) of the disease. In terms of awareness, FAO has produced [editable leaflets, posters](#) and [videos](#) in multiple languages.

In terms of training, FAO has developed an online four-week training on LSD preparedness, which was implemented for [Europe and Asia](#) (July 2020), as well as for [Russian-speaking countries](#). Over 700 participants gained knowledge and broadened their knowledge on the disease, how to recognize and how to best manage it. This online training will be adapted and conducted for Asia-Pacific and Southern Africa at the beginning of 2021.

Also, in 2021, FAO will start implementing a project to provide technical assistance on LSD preparedness to Central Asia, namely Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The project will assist countries by using many of the above-mentioned tools and materials, e.g., assessments capacity building, simulation exercises or awareness raising.

Importance of active and passive surveillance in an LSD vaccination cessation strategy (A. Broglia, EFSA)

Once the LSD epidemics is controlled, it is important to set a proper surveillance system to avoid re-incursion and demonstrated disease absence. The following should be set in this plan: the objective, the type of surveillance (active/passive), the possible source of infection (risk areas), the susceptible population to be targeted by the surveillance, the risk period for re-infection, the diagnostic tests and capacity available, the design prevalence, the sample size and frequency. For LSD early detection can be based on frequently (monthly) testing a sample of herds by clinical detection, while for demonstrate disease absence, serological screening is the choice. Passive surveillance should always be in place.

LSD epidemiological situation in Europe and neighboring areas – Occurrence and vaccination. Current State of play (evolution since GF TADs – SGE LSD9) (R. Olvera Porcel, DG SANTE)

Situation with LSD in South – East Europe has been stabilized due to successful regional vaccination strategy since 2016. Due the presented risk in the area, the LSD annual revaccination has been continued in 2020 in Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and Turkey (homologous in Turkish Thrace and heterologous in Anatolia). As it was indicated the mass vaccination campaign of cattle against LSD using live homologous vaccines figures clearly as the most effective control policy together with the systematic surveillance in line with the OIE rules, to confirm disease absence - ensure timely detection of any LSD recurrence. When vaccination is stopped, a contingency plan and vaccine availability would be needed, to react quickly with emergency vaccination and EC ready to support South – East Europe with sufficient capacity of the EU LSD vaccine bank in future. The regional coordination and cooperation are main option to be continued as efficient approach on the Region.

EURL activities of importance to the LSD diagnosis and the LSD vaccine control (K.De Clercq, EURL)

The EURL for capripox viruses brings to the attention the work by Russian colleagues. Byadovskaya et al. (2020)* reported that DIVA PCRs currently available and used in Europe do not recognize the currently circulating strains in Eastern Russian and Asian regions as field strains. The EURL emphasizes the need for discussion and further study on this topic. The EURL also emphasizes the need of adequate vaccine control both *in vitro* and *in vivo*, independently of the manufacturer. Furthermore, the EURL reports having organized in 2020 the annual capripox ring test for NRLs of EU member states and third countries and offers help in 2021 in characterizing strains and validating diagnostics to NRLs of EU member states and 3rd countries affected by current incursions of LSD.

*Performance of the currently available DIVA real-time PCR assays in classical and recombinant lumpy skin disease viruses. O Byadovskaya, Y Pestova, A Kononov, I Shumilova, S Kononova, A Nesterov, S Babiuk, A Sprygin. Transbound Emerg Dis. 2020 Nov 30. doi: 10.1111/tbed.13942

During the discussion on the LSD strategy for 2021 in of South East Europe.

Eran Raizman has intervened and was concerned regarding the new strain circulating in Russia based on their surveillance and asked Dr. K. De Clercq his opinion about that.

Dr. K. De Clercq has mentioned that during the vaccination campaign in EU countries Neethling Strain Vaccines were used and circulation of these vaccine strains was never observed. Studies by Russian colleagues indicate circulation of vaccine-like or recombinant strains in Eastern Russia and Asian regions. These strains were different from the LSD strain that circulated in Europe and the Caucasian region and was surely different from the vaccine strains used in Europe. Therefore, we should investigate the origin of the vaccine-like and recombinant strains.

Dr. Budimir Plavsic proposed to coordinate this work with Russian colleagues and the OIE regional office in Moscow could provide support in this matter if needed. Also, he has asked that if the source of these strains can be identified that the EURL would recommend which type of vaccine should be used in the future?

Dr. K. De Clercq confirmed that if this strain could be provided to the EURL, a recommendation could be made to prevent the use of any vaccines containing similar strains. The EURL emphasized the need for manufacturer independent quality control of commercial vaccines available on the worldwide market before purchasing them.

Dr. Francisco Reviriego intervened to propose that a scientific meeting, under the GF-TADS Europe umbrella, with the participation of the EU Reference Laboratory for Capripox Viruses (EURL), the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), OIE Reference Laboratories for LSD and other LSD experts, the European Commission and other interested parties dedicated to correctly frame the issue of DIVA PCR differentiation of LSDV strains raised in the presentation of the EURL at this LSD SGE 10 meeting with a view to providing recommendations to the LSD SGE in South-East Europe

Dr. Budimir Plavsic has confirmed that this procedure takes time but if countries find it as needed, we can start ASAP based in the Standard Setting process of the OIE with evidence from Scientific sides.

Albania requested information regarding possible EU support for LSD surveillance activities in 2021.

Montenegro and Serbia shared their experience in receiving EU financial support (grant) for LSD surveillance. In 2020 Montenegro and Serbia implemented LSD surveillance, subject to EU co-financing. Submission and assessment of the relevant reports is expected to take place in line with the EU grant agreements already in place.

Dimitrios Dilaveris (EC, DG SANTE) clarified that the EU legal instruments that allowed co-financing of LSD surveillance measures expired at the end of 2020. A new legal framework is expected to be available by April/May 2021. Discussions, on a bilateral basis, with the concerned countries and territories of South-East Europe, can be expected after that period. In the meantime, all countries and territories of South-East Europe are invited to continue to implement the necessary LSD surveillance and control activities in 2021, in line with the current GF-TADS recommendations and under the same conditions specified for 2020, where applicable.