

Veterinary Services and Military Collaboration in Emergency Response in Italy

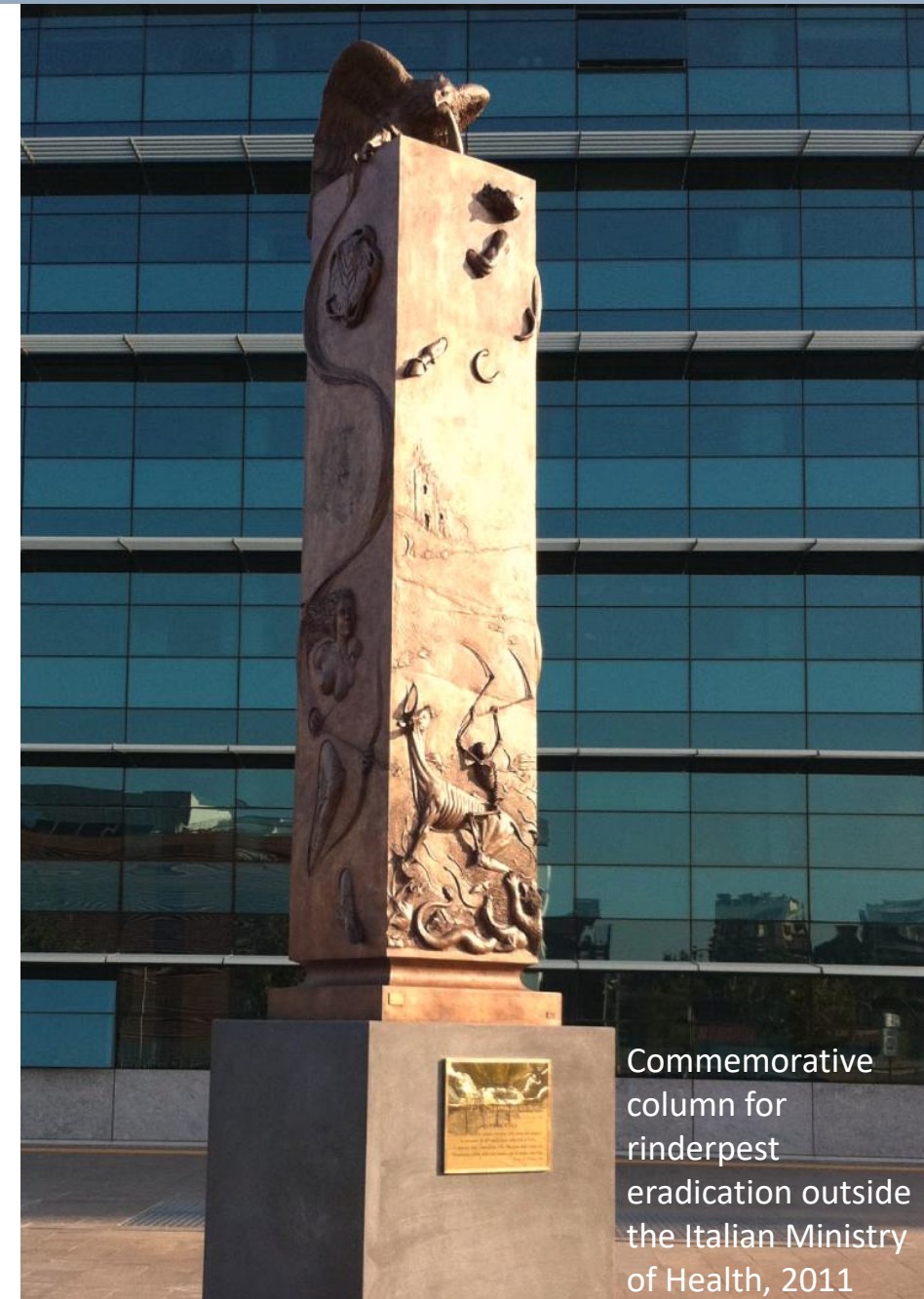
African Swine Fever (ASF) case study

WOAH Workshop: Strengthening Preparedness and Response to Biological Threats in Europe

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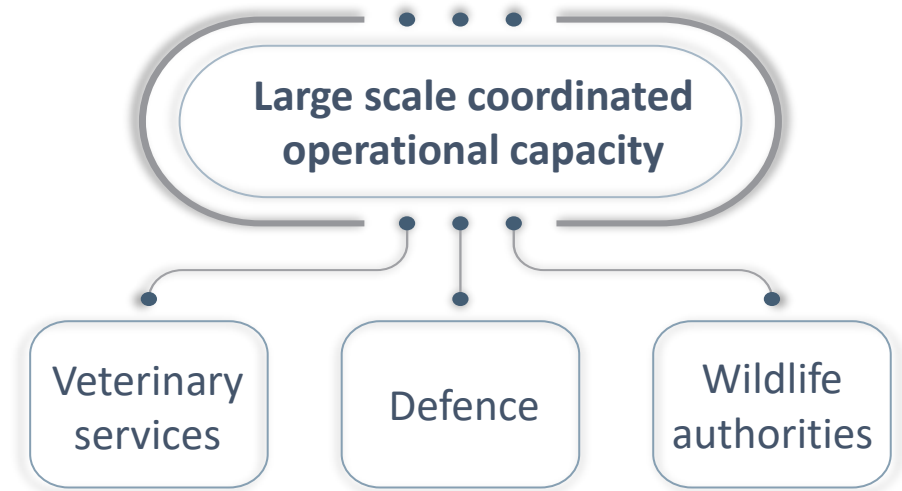
Commemorative
column for
rinderpest
eradication outside
the Italian Ministry
of Health, 2011

ASF requires a whole-of-government response

African Swine Fever is more than an animal disease, representing simultaneously an **animal health emergency** and a **major economic threat** to the pork sector and international trade

Why a whole-of-government response is necessary

- **Wildlife ecology** makes eradication operationally complex
- **Large-scale carcass search and disposal** requires logistics and manpower
- **Biosecurity compliance** requires inspection and enforcement capacity
- Physical containment measures require **infrastructure monitoring**
- **Surveillance, data reporting and coordination** require an integrated operational picture



Italy's ASF governance framework

The Italian **ASF response is built on a multi-layered governance system** based on the regional framework to ensure clear strategic direction at national level, operational implementation at regional and local levels and continuous reporting and monitoring.



Actors in Italy's ASF operational response system

Veterinary authorities (leadership role)
(Ministry, Regions, Local Health Authorities)

Carcass detection remains the **backbone of ASF control in wildlife** (part of the **inalienable patrimony of the State**)

Provincial Police

(Territorial wildlife enforcement service)

- Support to carcass search and canine teams
- Territorial organisation of culling activities
- Carcass removal support
- Checks on biosecurity measures in wild boar management

+

ENCI canine units

(Private operational partner of trained dog-handler teams)

Italian Army

(Defense sector)

- Terrain operations and surveillance support
- Wildlife monitoring and carcass detection
- Logistical support for disposal and field operations

Carabinieri NAS

(Health Protection Command)

- Biosecurity inspections in pig farms
- Enforcement of sanitary regulations
- Joint inspections with veterinary services

Carabinieri CUFAA

(Forest, Environmental and Agri-food Units)

- Enforcement of wildlife measures and feeding bans
- Monitoring of containment infrastructure
- Environmental surveillance



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Joint field operations

Joint field actions to limit wild boar movements through artificial and natural barriers



Proactive carcass search and safe management of wild boar carcasses found in restricted areas



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Rationale for appointing an Extraordinary Commissioner for ASF

Following the **first ASF detection** in wild boar in North-West Italy in **2022**, virus circulation in wildlife affected the **Northern Italy cluster in 2024–2025**, particularly Lombardy (Pavia, Lodi and Milan)

This area is characterised by a **high density of pig production and important wildlife corridors**, such as the Ticino Park

The situation required **reinforced surveillance and biosecurity measures**

The Italian Government appointed an **Extraordinary Commissioner for ASF** to **strengthen national coordination** of the emergency response and **ensure implementation** of the eradication strategy through **coordinated actions and adaptive operational measures across all stakeholders**



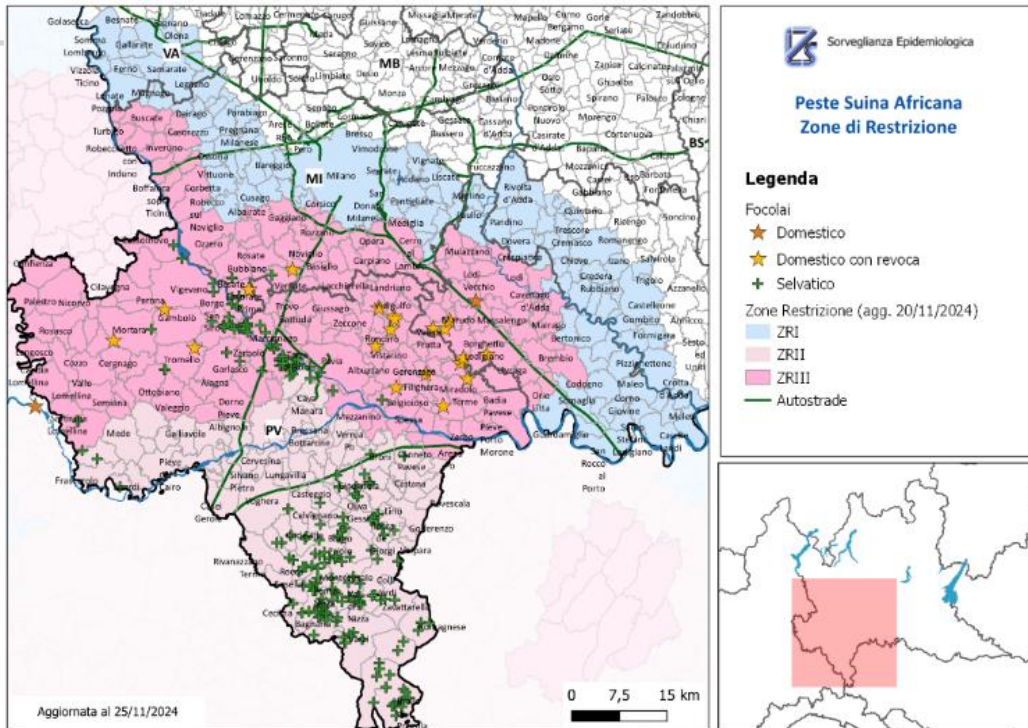
ASF epidemic waves in Lombardy: evolution and impact

2023 - First wave:

9 outbreaks in Pavia

2024 – Early detection:

Most outbreaks identified before clinical signs



1

2

3

4

2024 – Second wave:

21 outbreaks

in Pavia, Milan and Lodi

2025–2026 – Stabilisation:

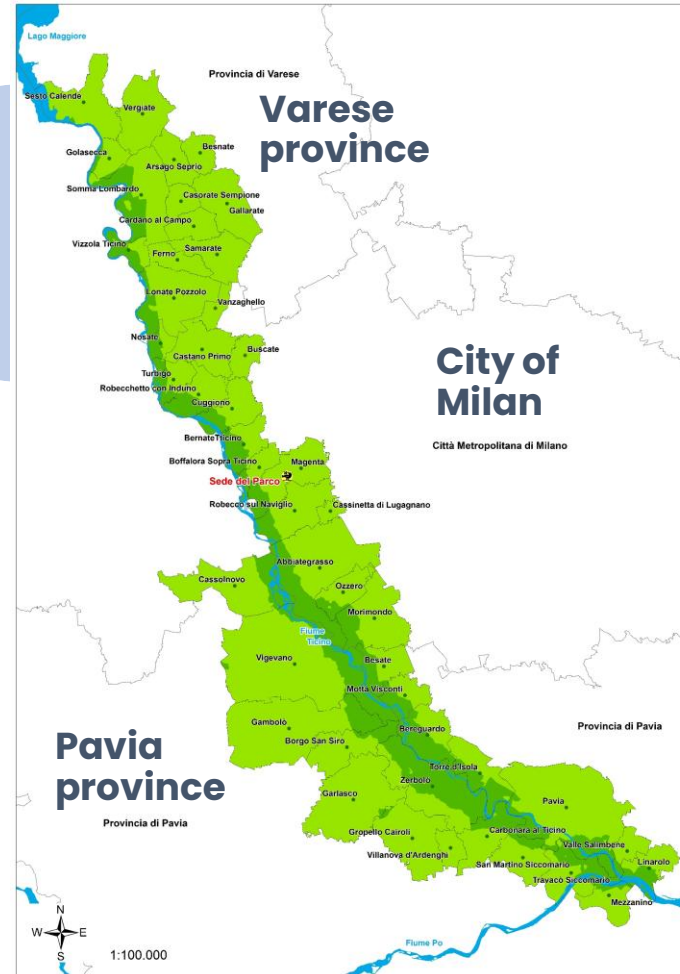
No new domestic outbreaks
since 17 October 2024

Passive surveillance enabled early outbreak detection in 2024, strengthening containment capacity and reducing delayed response



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Among the affected area



Ticino Park

A protected regional ecological corridor, whose connected riverine, forest and wetland habitats can facilitate wild boar movement

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A protected regional ecological corridor, whose connected riverine, forest and wetland habitats can facilitate wild boar movement

Source: Parco Lombardo della Valle del Ticino, official website – Rete Natura 2000; FAI – Parco del Ticino, Vergiate (Varese). Image: Wikimedia Commons, Parco del Ticino, Pietro Ugazio (public domain)



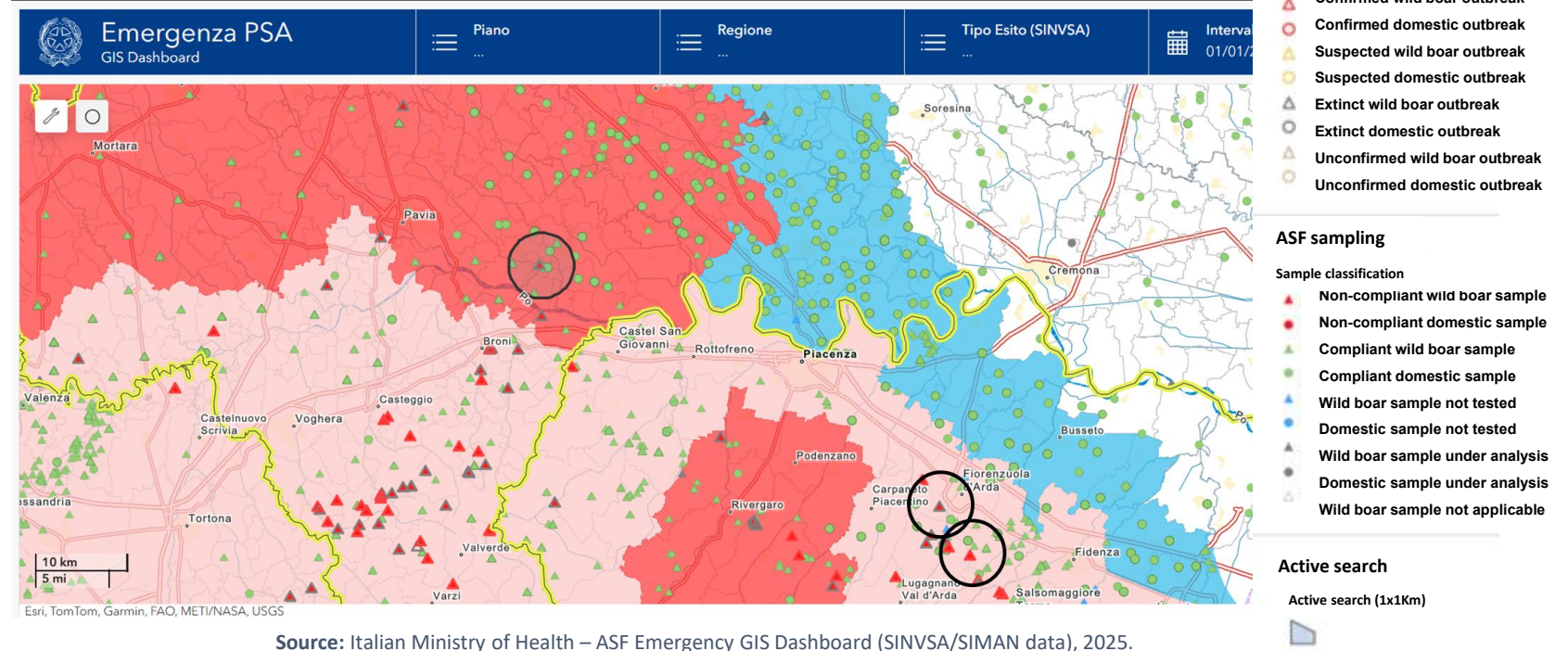

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Joint biosecurity inspections in pig farms

Joint inspections (by NAS and veterinary services) were conducted **weekly** in pig farms located in **ASF restriction zones** or close to positive wild boar findings

Farm selection was based on risk analysis, considering:

- Proximity to infected wild boar carcasses
- farm size and production type
- potential epidemiological links



If serious deficiencies were identified, veterinary authorities imposed movement restrictions, mandatory biosecurity upgrades and administrative sanctions, with 15 days to comply before depopulation or slaughter could be ordered.

Surveillance activities and operational reporting

Operational activities are monitored through regular reports submitted to the Extraordinary Commissioner, ensuring continuous assessment of the ASF situation

These reports include:

- **Wildlife surveillance activities**
- **Biosecurity inspections in farms**
- **Enforcement of restrictions and feeding bans**

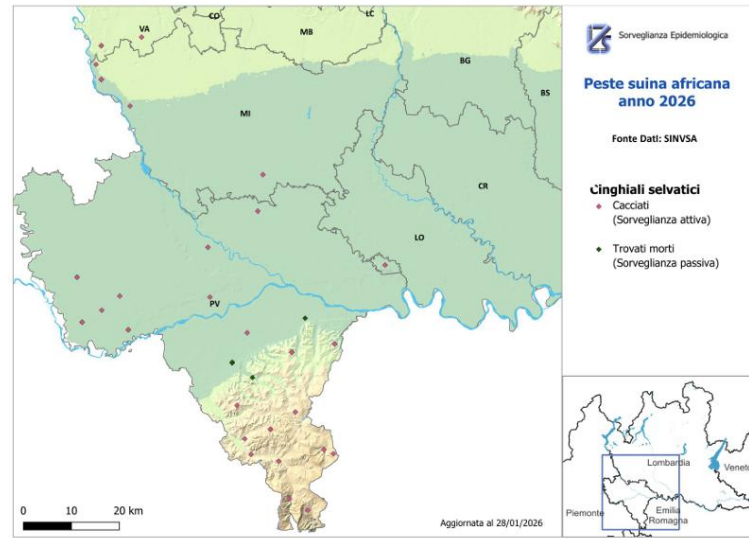


Figura 3 – Sorveglianza PSA in Regione Lombardia - Cinghiali abbattuti e trovati morti nel 2026

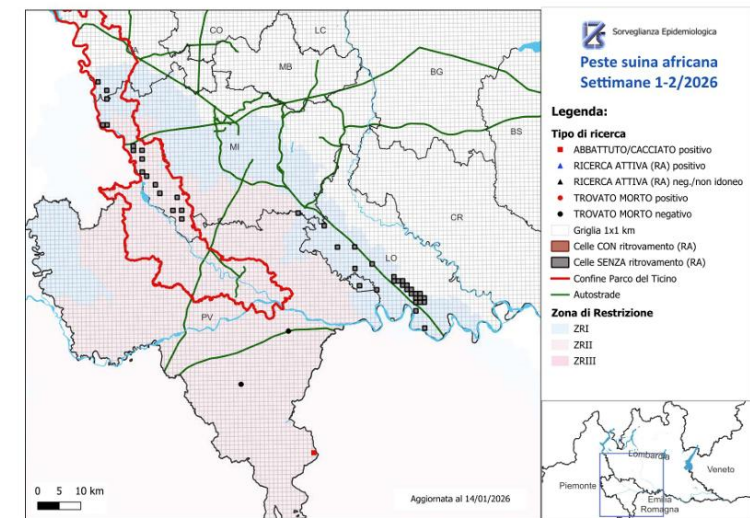


Figura 1 – Controlli effettuati e supervisionati dall'autorità amministrativa competente di Sorveglianza Pro-Attiva bisettimanale in merito all'emergenza PSA nel territorio della Regione Lombardia soggetto a restrizione - Periodo: dal 29/12/2025 al 11/01/2026 (settimana 1-2/2026). Nella cartografia è evidenziato il punto di abbattimento in data 09/01/2026 del cinghiale in Comune di Romagnese (PV).

Source: Lombardy Region – ASF ongoing surveillance reports based on data from the National Veterinary Information System (SINVSA), 2026.

- In 2025, >11,000 wild boar tested in active surveillance and ~900 in passive surveillance, with most positives detected through carcass findings. In 2026, continuous CUFAA monitoring and operational reporting ensured sustained field surveillance and no ASF cases detected in domestic pig farms during the monitored period.
- Italy has achieved important progress in ASF containment, and the epidemiological situation is improving, although continued vigilance remains necessary in some restricted areas, including Liguria and Tuscany



Take home messages

The Italian experience with ASF highlights **several lessons that may be relevant for other countries facing similar emergencies**



Clear governance and adaptive legal instruments enable coordinated emergency response



Veterinary leadership ensures science-based control strategies



Law enforcement and defence support significantly expand operational field capacity



Large-scale wildlife surveillance and carcass detection enable early detection of ASF circulation



Strict farm biosecurity enforcement prevents spillover to domestic pigs





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Thank you
