Research and analysis: African swine fever in pigs in China

Updated: Added update 2 (31 August 2018).

Preliminary and updated outbreak assessments for African swine fever in the Liaoning region, north east China.

Statistical data set: Effort statistics July 2018

Statistics on effort use in western waters are submitted to the European Commission on the 15 day of every month.

Data provided to the European Commission in accordance with Commission Regulation (EC) No 2103/2004 (a,b)

Crabs

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	–	275,062	208,264	–
Maximum allowable effort (d) (kWdays)				–
Uptake (%)	0%	39%	38%	n/a

Demersal

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	517,405	3,535,913	4,389,915	58,364
Maximum allowable effort (d) (kWdays)	3,061,485	24,017,229	25,786,266	218,406
Uptake (%)	17%	15%	17%	27%

Scallops

Trip type	BSA(c)	ICES V-VI	ICES VII	ICES VIII
Effort deployed (kWdays)	–	434,566	2,094,245	–
Maximum allowable effort (d) (f) (kWdays)	1,223	1,974,425	3,315,619	–
Uptake (%)	0%	22%	63%	n/a

Source: UK Fisheries Administrations

(a) The Western Waters comprise the nine sea areas described in Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003: ICES V-VI, ICES VII, ICES VIII, ICES IX, ICES X, CECAF 34.1.1, CECAF 34.1.2, CECAF 34.2.0, and the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA), defined in Article 6.

(b) Regulated trips are those with target species listed by Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003, namely:

- Demersal species excluding those covered by Regulation (EEC) No 2347/2002
- Scallops
- Edible crab and spider crab

(c) Includes effort deployed on regulated trips in the Biologically Sensitive Area (BSA) by vessels over 10m in length, in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1954/2003.

(d) The maximum allowable effort permitted in each sea area is set in Council Regulation (EC) No 1415/2004. The UK does not hold allocations of effort for areas ICES IX, ICES X, CECAF 34.1.1, CECAF 34.1.2, CECAF 34.2.0."

e) Data provided to the European Commission in accordance with Commission Regulation
EC No 2103/2004 only contains validated data on the MMO systems

f) baseline includes any transfers from other member states

Press release: Ash dieback found on three new host species of tree in the UK

The Forestry Commission is urging industry to be vigilant for signs of ash dieback and report suspected sightings through its Tree Alert reporting system.

The call comes after three new tree and shrub species in the same family as ash (Oleaceae) tested positive for ash dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) infection at the Westonbirt Arboretum, Gloucestershire.

The findings are unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment as the newly infected species are ornamental and are not widespread or native to the UK.

The infection was identified by staff at the arboretum on mock privet, narrow-leaved mock privet and white fringetree – ornamental trees and shrubs

from the Mediterranean and North America. The species were found in close proximity to infected ash trees.

Forest Research, Great Britain's principal organisation for forestry and tree related research, is conducting further tests on the nature of the infection. This includes monitoring other species in the Oleaceae family for susceptibility to H. fraxineus infection. A number of these species have already been tested including Osmanthus and Lilac, but were found to be negative.

UK Chief Plant Health Officer, Professor Nicola Spence, said:

> Since 2012, the Government has invested more than £6 million into ash dieback research. These findings highlight the importance of the Forestry Commission's reporting system, Tree Alert, and of arboreta and other plant collections, which play crucial roles in supporting the UK's world-leading plant health sector.
>
> Landscapers, gardeners and tree practitioners should be vigilant for signs of ash dieback on these new host species, and report suspicious findings through Tree Alert.

Over the last five years the Government has invested in world-leading research to advance understanding of the biology and pathology of the disease, including sequencing the ash genome and the ash dieback fungus. It has also funded the world's largest screening trial for tolerant trees, raising the possibility of an ash breeding programme in the future.

In May the Environment Secretary launched the first Tree Health Resilience Strategy – the first major publication to come out of the 25-Year Environment Plan. The strategy sets out a new proactive approach to tree health, with landowners, charities, the public and government working together to take actions to build resilience against pests and diseases to protect the nation's trees.

As part of this approach, a new senior cross-industry Plant Health Alliance to strengthen biosecurity practices across industry has been established.

Arboreta also continue to play a critical role in supporting work on ash dieback. Research by Forest Research has identified over 30 different ash species being grown in the main arboreta of Britain which will be used in trials to assess tolerance of these species to ash dieback.

Defra and the Forestry Commission continue to work with landowners and local councils, as well as the plant health sector internationally, to share experiences, identify solutions and develop action plans to deal with the impacts of ash dieback.

To report a suspected case of ash dieback in any of these newly identified

host species, visit the Tree Alert portal.

News story: Master and owner charged for illegal salvage of sunken vessel

Dutch company Friendship Offshore BV has been convicted of conducting an unlicensed salvaging operation on a sunken merchant vessel named the SS Harrovian in 2016. The case was heard at Newcastle Crown Court on the 26 July 2018, in a prosecution brought by the MMO.

The court heard how in August 2016 MMO officers, acting on information relating to a vessel operating an illegal salvage of a wreck 70 miles south west of the Isles of Scilly, were deployed to intercept and inspect the vessel.

This inspection resulted in the discovery of approx. £90,000 worth of copper and steel. The vessel's master, Walter Bakker, admitted that he did not have the relevant marine licence and demonstrated how he had dimmed the vessel's Automatic Identification System (AIS) in order to avoid detection. The vessel was subsequently detained to Falmouth for further inspection.

Analysis revealed that the vessel had conducted three unlicensed salvage operations on the wreck of the SS Harrovian. The SS Harrovian was built by Bartram & Sons, Ltd, Sunderland in 1914 and was sunk on a voyage from New York to Le Havre by the German submarine U-69 in the English Channel in 1916.

During the sentencing, the judge referred to the fact that the SS Harrovian was an important heritage asset and despite being at sea, was still of considerable heritage value.

At the initial hearing in February 2018, the defendants pleaded guilty to charges reflecting the three unlicensed salvaging operations they conducted. The MMO also made application for a confiscation order under the Proceeds of Crime Confiscation Order (POCA) with the assistance of the North East Regional Asset Recovery Team.

Walter Bakker was fined £2,000. Friendship Offshore BV was fined £6,000 and £44,930 costs. The confiscation order against the company was agreed at £609,086 with an actual realisable amount assessed at £190,643, to be paid within three months.

An MMO spokesperson said:

> This positive outcome was made possible by strong team working between the MMO, Historic England and the North East Regional Asset

> Recovery Team.
>
> This case is very important and shows that we will take action against those deliberately avoiding the required consents in order to make a profit. The SS Harrovian is an important heritage asset and this result sends out a clear message that vessels of this nature should not be exploited.

Press release: Threatened sand dunes given a new lease of LIFE

Sand dunes across England are set for a golden future following £4.3 million worth of funding to help restore and protect these at risk habitats.

The funding – awarded to a partnership led by Natural England as part of the European Union's LIFE programme – will help deliver a major conservation project to explore how to re-establish the natural movement within dunes and create the conditions that some of our rarest wildlife relies upon.

Healthy sand dunes with moving sand are a sanctuary for endangered plants and animals like the natterjack toad, dune gentian and sand lizard. However these habitats are currently being smothered and fixed by a tide of invasive non-native plants turning it into scrubland. Sand dunes are now one of the most at risk habitats in Europe. Only 20,000 hectares remain across England and Wales – an area around half the size of the Isle of Wight.

The DuneLIFE project will help Natural England improve the condition of key sand dune sites in Lincolnshire, Dorset, Cornwall, Devon, Merseyside and Cumbria by tackling the root causes of decline. The scheme will:

- Deliver a programme of removal of invasive species to rebalance the natural processes of dune colonisation
- Restore sand dunes and dune slacks
- Create bare sand patches by turf stripping and sand scraping
- Encourage more people to access and enjoy dunes and take part in their conservation

Natural England are working in partnership with Plantlife, National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts to deliver this ambitious and innovative project.

Chairman of Natural England, Andrew Sells, said:

> This is a wonderful project to help save our sand dunes and promote a better understanding of this fascinating landscape.

> Sand dunes are a familiar backdrop to a day at the beach, but few people realise the serious threat they face across Europe. I am delighted that we have this exciting opportunity to work with our partners to safeguard these wildlife-rich habitats for future generations.

Marian Spain, Plantlife Chief Executive, said:

> Nestling often undetected in the dunes are a treasure chest of wildflowers and wealth of wildlife jewels.
>
> Re-enlivening sand dunes – much of them now suffocated under a blanket of thick grass and scrub – is urgent if we are to save dune flowers such as the plucky little fen orchid from extinction. Purple milk-vetch and dune gentian, two other rare dune gems, face an increasingly uncertain future without the help of this exciting project. And the really great news is that everybody who visits the dunes can make a difference: we know now that trampling feet is a great way to free up space for rare plants.
>
> While millions either live in coastal communities or visit the seaside every year it is sadly little-known that dunes are listed as the habitat most at risk in Europe. This project can transform their future by inspiring and promoting a better understanding of their value to wildflowers, wildlife and people.

David Bullock, Head of Nature Conservation at the National Trust, said:

> Sand dunes are amongst the most threatened landscapes in Europe because we have sought to stabilise them and also they have been invaded by non-native vegetation.
>
> The windblown sand spaces that the special animals and plants need to survive are no longer there.
>
> This project will create new open blown patches of sand and we hope not to just connect nature with nature; but people with nature and sand dunes as well.

Stephanie Hilborne OBE, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts, said:

> Everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of standing amidst a sand dune. These are wild places and when you stand amongst the marram grass and sea holly, listening to the sound of the surf and the call of the stonechats you may look up to see a raven wheeling above.
>
> Our sand dunes don’t just provide wildlife with a home, and us with such experiences but they act as a natural flood defence. So this partnership is an exciting new development given that so many of our dunes are in trouble.
>
> We are looking forward to helping people breathe new life in to our dunes from Cumbria to Cornwall and across to Lincolnshire. Thanks to funding from the EU LIFE programme there is a great chance to help many people work together to change the natural world for the better.

This successful LIFE bid marks an important step towards a larger programme of sand dune conservation work around the coast of England and Wales which has already gained initial support for over £4 milllion of National Lottery funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Natural England are working in partnership with Natural Resources Wales, Plantlife, National Trust, and The Wildlife Trusts, to deliver this ambitious project.