

CURRENT SITUATION OF BLUETONGUE IN GREECE

**J. Tsakiris¹ E. Aronis¹ M. Sachsamanoglou¹ P. Petridou¹ T. Patounis¹
P. Iliadou² M. Patakakis³ S. Doudounakis⁴ O. Mangana-Vougiouka^{2*}**

The first incursion of bluetongue (BT) in Greece was in 1979 on Lesvos Island. The disease was caused by serotype 4 (BTV-4), which was endemic in Turkey, with *Culicoides imicola* the virus vector. Strict measures were applied, preventing the spread of the disease to the rest of the country. In the epidemic of 1998-2001, four different serotypes invaded Greece: BTV-1, 4, 9 and 16. The vectors were *C. imicola* and *C. obsoletus*. In November 2008, the type of virus that invaded Lesvos Island was identified as BTV-16. In few flocks BTV-8 was also identified. In February 2009, seropositive and ribonucleic acid (RNA) positive bovines (BTV-16 again) were detected on Chios Island without clinical disease. In late September 2009, new outbreaks appeared on Lesvos Island caused again by BTV-16. During the recent incursion (until December 2009), 132 flocks of sheep and goats were infected. The epidemic began in north-eastern regions of the island and spread from north to south on the island. Sporadic cases occurred on the east side, and the west side seemed BT

free. BT clinical signs that were moderate and slightly different from the previous year were observed in sheep but not in cattle. The humidity (after the first rain) and warm weather present at that time in combination with moderate north winds helped the spread of the disease. *Culicoides* trapping revealed significant numbers of *C. imicola*. Clinical suspicion of the disease was followed by laboratory confirmation. Serological, virological and molecular biology tests were conducted. Results were confirmed by the Community Reference laboratory. Appropriate restrictive measures have been taken from 2008 on, in order to protect the other regions of Greece. No clinical signs or seroconversion has been observed at time of writing in the rest of the country.

KEYWORDS: BLUETONGUE – *CULICOIDES IMICOLA* – *CULICOIDES OBSOLETUS* – SEROTYPE – GREECE.

1. Veterinary Directorate of Lesvos, Greece.

2. Virology Department, Institute of Infectious and Parasitic diseases, Centre of Athens Veterinary Institutes, Agia Paraskevi, Greece.

3. Parasitology Department, Institute of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases, Centre of Athens Veterinary Institutes, Greece.

4. Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Directorate of Animal Health, Infectious and Parasitic Diseases Department, Greece.

* Corresponding author

Tel./Fax: +30 21 06 01 14 99

E-mail: viruslab.ath@gmail.com