

WEEKLY BULLETIN

Communicable Disease Threats Report

Week 44, 29 October – 4 November 2023

Today's disease topics

1. West Nile virus One Health seasonal surveillance – 2023
2. Mass gathering monitoring – Rugby World Cup 2023, France
3. Detection of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus in ticks in southern France

Executive Summary

West Nile virus One Health seasonal surveillance – 2023

- Since the last update, and as of 1 November 2023, eight human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) infection have been reported by EU/EEA countries and none have been reported by EU-neighbouring countries.
- Since the beginning of the 2023 transmission season, 680 human cases of WNV infection have been reported by EU/EEA countries and 91 by EU-neighbouring countries.
- Since the beginning of the 2023 WNV transmission season, and as of 1 November 2023, EU/EEA countries have reported 134 outbreaks among equids and 234 outbreaks among birds.

Mass gathering monitoring – Rugby World Cup 2023, France

- No cross-border threats linked to the Rugby World Cup were detected between 4 September and 3 November 2023.
- The epidemic intelligence monitoring of the Rugby World Cup France 2023 ends on 3 November 2023.

Detection of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus in ticks in southern France

- France reported the detection of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever (CCHF) virus in ticks of the species *Hyalomma marginatum*, collected from cattle in the Pyrénées-Orientales department in April 2023.
- This finding establishes for the first time the presence of the virus in France.
- The likelihood of human infection via tick bites is currently very low, given that the ticks are only active in the spring (April-July).
- The likelihood of direct transmission via contact with bodily fluids from infected small mammals, such as hares and rabbits, is currently considered low.

1. West Nile virus One Health seasonal surveillance – 2023

Overview

This is the 23rd weekly update of the 2023 West Nile virus (WNV) monitoring season.

Since last week's update, and as of 1 November 2023, European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) countries have reported eight human cases of West Nile virus (WNV) infection. Cases were reported by Italy (6), Germany (1) and Spain (1). EU-neighbouring countries did not report any human cases of WNV infection.

This week, among the reporting countries, the following NUTS 3 or GAUL1 regions have reported autochthonous human cases of WNV infection for the first time since the start of this season: Meißen in Germany.

Since the beginning of the 2023 transmission season and as of 1 November 2023, EU/EEA countries have reported 680 human cases of WNV infection in Italy (319), Greece (161, one of which had an unknown place of infection), Romania (100), France (38), Hungary (29), Spain (16), Germany (6), Croatia (6) and Cyprus (5). EU/EEA countries have reported 58 deaths in Greece (22), Italy (21), Romania (12) and Spain (3). EU-neighbouring countries have reported 91 human cases of WNV infection in Serbia (90) and North Macedonia (1) and two deaths in Serbia (2).

During the current transmission season, within the reporting countries, autochthonous human cases of WNV infection were reported from 138 different NUTS 3 or GAUL 1 regions. Of those regions, the following reported autochthonous human cases of WNV infection for the first time ever: Gironde, Charente-Maritime, Alpes-Maritimes, Charente and Haute-Corse in France, Sömmerda in Germany, Kastoria and Ioannina in Greece, Imperia, Taranto, Lecce, Cosenza, Bari, Salerno and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola in Italy, Gorj and Timiş in Romania, Cáceres, Huelva, Valencia, Barcelona and Toledo in Spain.

Since the beginning of the 2023 transmission season, 134 outbreaks among equids and 234 outbreaks among birds have been reported by EU/EEA countries. Outbreaks among equids have been reported by France (38), Spain (33), Hungary (26), Italy (23), Germany (12), Austria (1) and Portugal (1). Outbreaks among birds have been reported by Italy (186), Germany (18), Spain (17), Bulgaria (6), Hungary (3), France (2), Austria (1) and Greece (1).

Please refer to the [West Nile virus infection webpage](#) for maps and a dashboard.

Sources: The European Surveillance System (TESSy), Animal Disease Information System (ADIS)

ECDC assessment

As the weather conditions have become less favourable for vector-borne transmission in most of the affected areas, the intensity of WNV circulation has decreased and is expected to decrease further in the coming weeks.

As of 1 November 2023, the most recent onset date reported was 18 October 2023.

In accordance with the [Commission Directive 2014/110/EU](#), prospective blood donors should be deferred for 28 days after leaving a risk area for locally acquired WNV infection, unless the result of an individual nucleic acid test is negative.

Actions

During the WNV transmission season, ECDC publishes a dashboard and an epidemiological summary every Friday.

Further information

Data on human cases of WNV are collected via The European Surveillance System (TESSy), managed by ECDC. Imported cases are not included in this report. The following EU-neighbouring countries reported human cases of WNV infection to ECDC: Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

Animal data (i.e. outbreaks among equids and birds) are collected through the Animal Disease Information System (ADIS) of the European Commission. Reporting of WNV in equids and birds is mandatory at the EU/EEA level.

The distribution of human infections covers EU/EEA and EU-neighbouring countries, whereas the distribution of outbreaks among equids and birds only relates to EU/EEA countries.

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.*

Last time this event was included in the CDTR: 27 October 2023

2. Mass gathering monitoring – Rugby World Cup 2023, France

Overview

The [Rugby World Cup 2023](#) (RWC) took place in France between 8 September and 28 October 2023, with matches played at nine venues in 10 host cities. In total, 20 teams participated, including teams from four EU/EEA countries, and there were a total of 48 matches. The participating teams were from France, New Zealand, Italy, Uruguay, Namibia, South Africa, Ireland, Scotland, Tonga, Romania, Wales, Australia, Fiji, Georgia, Portugal, England, Japan, Argentina, Samoa and Chile. The games took place in nine stadiums across the country in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nantes, Nice, Saint Denis, Saint-Étienne and Toulouse. The capacities of the stadiums ranged from 33 103 in Stadium de Toulouse to 80 023 in Stade de France, Saint Denis, where the final matches were played. More than 600 000 international visitors were expected to visit France for the Rugby World Cup, with over 2.5 million tickets sold, according to a [media report](#). Over half the international visitors were from the United Kingdom (UK), followed by Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and other countries. ECDC recommendations to prevent infectious disease outbreaks were provided in the [ECDC's weekly CDTR report for week 36](#).

During the ECDC monitoring period, an [outbreak of botulism](#) was reported in Bordeaux, France, in September, when rugby matches were taking place in the city. Fifteen people from eight countries were infected after eating locally made canned sardines at a restaurant. Of those infected, ten were hospitalised, eight admitted to ICU and one woman died. No new cases have been reported since 15 September 2023.

In addition, two signals were investigated, but were found not to be related to the Rugby World Cup 2023:

- The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Health Agency [reported](#) a local outbreak of measles in Ardeche, with 63 people diagnosed as of 26 October 2023, mainly affecting students from a school in Guilherand-Granges. Two of the reported cases were hospitalised and later recovered. This ongoing local outbreak did not pose a risk to the Rugby World Cup 2023 events in France.
- There were 40 cases of locally acquired dengue [reported](#) in mainland France during the Rugby World Cup monitoring period, however they did not affect players or spectators at the sporting events in question.

Weekly monitoring update

Since 26 October 2023, no new cases of measles have been [reported](#) by the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Health Agency, in relation to the outbreak in Guilherand-Granges.

No new cross-border public health events related to the RWC were detected between 26 October and 3 November 2023.

Other events of interest

No other events of interest have been detected this week.

ECDC assessment

The risk to EU/EEA citizens of infection with communicable diseases during the Rugby World Cup 2023 was assessed by ECDC as low. As with other mass gathering events, the risk of communicable disease outbreaks is greatest for respiratory, food- and waterborne diseases, and vector-borne diseases.

Actions

ECDC was monitoring this event through its epidemic intelligence activities for mass gatherings between 4 September and 3 November 2023, in collaboration with the French authorities. Weekly updates were included in the Communicable Disease Threats Report (CDTR). This will be the last update on the Rugby World Cup France 2023.

Last time this event was included in the CDTR: 31 October 2023.

3. Detection of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever virus in ticks in southern France

Overview

France [reported](#) the detection of CCHF virus in ticks of the species *Hyalomma marginatum*, collected from cattle in the Pyrénées-Orientales department in April 2023. This is the first detection of the virus in the country. The tick collection was part of a research study to detect CCHF virus, conducted by the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). The laboratory result was confirmed by the National Reference Center for Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers at Institut Pasteur, Lyon (CNR FHV).

The CNR FHV has identified the clade III through whole genome sequencing from three different ticks.

To date, there have been no locally-acquired human cases of CCHF reported in France. Notification of CCHF infections in humans is mandatory. A specific communication to health professionals is in preparation to raise awareness regarding CCHF prevention, mandatory reporting and clinical management.

ECDC assessment

As the adult *Hyalomma marginatum*'s activity period ranges from April to July, the current likelihood of human infections from tick bites is considered very low and is not expected to increase until spring next year. It should be emphasised that ticks attached to livestock do not pose much of a risk to humans, as they are not able to bite after having bitten an animal.

Immature forms of these ticks (nymphs) feed on small mammals, such as hares and rabbits, until October and can infect them. The likelihood of direct transmission via contact with bodily fluids from an infected small mammal is considered low, but hunters should take special precautions when skinning these animals.

Hyalomma marginatum is widely [distributed](#) in southern Europe where there is a possible risk of the disease emerging. To date, CCHF [locally-acquired cases](#) have been reported in Spain, where the vector is *Hyalomma lusitanicum*, and in Bulgaria.

Actions

ECDC is monitoring the situation and will remain in close contact with the French public health institute. An in-depth multidisciplinary assessment of the risk of human cases will be carried out in France during the next season of tick activity in spring 2024, and in subsequent years.

Further information

Further details on CCHF are available in [ECDC's factsheet](#).