



Aujeszky's Disease Surveillance Programme

Background

Aujeszky's disease (AD), also known as pseudorabies, is a highly contagious viral infection that causes central nervous system signs and high mortality rates in young pigs, and respiratory disease in older pigs. Although associated primarily with pigs, it can affect a variety of other mammals. Humans are not affected by AD. Ireland is currently free of AD. The disease is WOAHP listed and is notifiable in Ireland.

Legislation

In 2012, following 3 national testing phases, Ireland became listed in Annex I to Decision 2008/185/EC, (by Commission Implementing Decision 2012/701/EU of 13 November 2012) as a Member State free of AD without vaccination. At the same time, Northern Ireland was also successful in eradicating the disease and as a result, the island of Ireland is considered one AD free region.

Ireland carries out an annual serological survey of the national pig population, to demonstrate continuing freedom from Aujeszky's disease.

Commission Implementation Decision 2012/701/EU has now been implicitly repealed by Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/620 of 15 April 2021 which lists the whole territory of Ireland as being free from Aujeszky's Disease Virus.

Testing for Aujeszky's Disease

Blood samples for the programme are taken from cull sows in slaughter plants. Herds which contain twenty sows or more are eligible for sampling. The upper limit for the number of samples to be taken from any one herd is twenty. All tests are carried out in the blood testing laboratory operated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in Cork. A summary of tests carried out is shown in Table 1 below.



Year	Number of Samples tested	Results
2020	2220	Negative
2021	2075	Negative
2022	1595	Negative
2023	1553	Negative
2024	2209	Negative

Table 1: Number of samples tested for Aujeszky’s disease in recent years.

Passive Surveillance

The active surveillance outlined above is primarily aimed at demonstrating disease freedom to trading partners, and is supplementary to the passive surveillance which Ireland regards as its mainstay in detecting incursions of exotic disease.

Aujeszky’s Disease is a notifiable disease in Ireland, meaning that anyone who suspects that an animal may have the disease is legally obliged to notify DAFM.

Beyond disease reporting, DAFM operates a network of regional veterinary laboratories, strategically located around the country.

Farmers and private veterinary practitioners (PVPs) submit samples from sick animals to the laboratories every week, and therefore DAFM can be confident that in the event that disease reporting was not effective in detecting an incursion of Aujeszky’s Disease, then laboratory-based passive surveillance would achieve this result instead. Farmers are encouraged to report suspicions of Aujeszky’s Disease to their local Regional Veterinary Office, and to make use of their local Regional Veterinary Laboratory to aid with diagnosis of disease conditions.