

[2] *Russia: concerns, import restrictions*

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Source: *Rosselkhoznadzor (Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance, Russia) news release [in Russian, trans., & summ., edited]* <http://fsvps.ru/fsvps/news/4088.html>

On the outcome of negotiations of Rosselkhoznadzor relating to the massive outbreak of a new animal disease caused by Schmallenberg virus [SBV]

[For the names and responsibilities of participants from Russia, EU, and the affected EU countries, please go to the source URL above].

Genetic analysis showed that SBV belongs to the Bunyaviridae family, genus *Orthobunyavirus* and is related to Akabane virus, an exotic virus, previously detected in ruminants in remote regions of the world. Presumably, the virus is carried by blood-sucking insects and is vertically transmitted from mother to offspring during its prenatal development. The present outbreak has swept the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, France, and the UK.

Human infection with SBV, as evaluated by the Dutch National Institute for Health and the Environment and by the European Centre for Prevention and Disease Control, cannot be ruled out, although it seems unlikely. The experts now point to the enormous material losses associated with the spread of the disease [in animals].

According to virologists, despite the fact that SBV has an undoubted resemblance to other orthobunyaviruses, it has pronounced individual features. In this regard, many aspects of the initial outbreak, its distribution, and transfer of the virus remain unclear. The analysis is hampered by the fact that now we seem to face the consequences of infection that occurred months ago, in the summer or early fall of last year [2011]. The researchers emphasize that our knowledge of the biology of a new pathogenic virus is fragmentary and based on extrapolation of the known properties of structurally related viruses.

Despite the seriousness of the outbreak and the lack of clarity on many issues concerning its biology and epizootic risk, no measures to limit the movement of animals from affected regions across the EU have been undertaken; this is a cause for very serious concern for Rosselkhoznadzor.

Rosselkhoznadzor offered the assistance of Russian virologists in conducting joint research on the biology of the new virus and the establishment of effective measures for its diagnosis. Attention was drawn to the fact that only rapid exchange of information can allow Rosselkhoznadzor to avoid the introduction of excessive measures to ensure the biological security of Russia. At the present time, as emphasized by Eugene Nepoklonov, [deputy director of] Rosselkhoznadzor, it is considered reasonable and necessary to introduce temporary restrictions on the import of live cattle and small ruminants, as well as genetic material -- semen and embryos, from the European countries affected by SBV.

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