

## Symposium “Anthrax, African Swine Fever and Bluetongue Disease in Croatia in 2025“

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The Committee on Animal and Comparative Pathology of the Department of Medical Sciences of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (CASA) organized the symposium „Anthrax, African Swine Fever and Bluetongue Disease in Croatia in 2025.“ The symposium was held on 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2025 in the Library of Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (CASA) in Zagreb. It was aimed to present the epidemiological aspects of the newest outbreaks of anthrax, African swine fever and bluetongue disease which affected the farm animals in Croatia in 2025. The year 2025 was truly an *annus horribilis* for the Croatian veterinary profession and science.

At the beginning of the symposium, the participants were welcomed by academician Vida Demarin, the secretary of the Department of Medical Sciences of CASA, and academician Josip Madić, the chairman of the Organizing Committee.

An inspiring introductory lecture was given by Prof. Ljubo Barbić, PhD, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb. He spoke about the emergence and re-emergence of infectious animal diseases with a special emphasis on challenges, lessons and directions for the future. The emergence of anthrax and the first cases

of African swine fever in July 2025 marked the beginning of a challenging period for the Croatian veterinary profession. The epizootiological situation further deteriorated with the appearance, for the first time, of two new serotypes of bluetongue virus. The complex challenges we have been facing recently are not an exception but part of a growing trend.

Gordan Kompes, PhD, from the Croatian Veterinary Institute, spoke about the anthrax epizootic in Croatia. The disease occurred in the vicinity of the town of Vrlika in July 2025. Positive results were recorded in 100 cattle, 2 goats, 7 sheep, 1 fawn and 1 donkey. Whole genome sequencing and phylogenetic analysis showed that the causative agent of the epizootic, *Bacillus anthracis*, belonged to group A, subgroup Trans Eurasia.

The next topic covered was post-exposure prophylaxis in humans during the onset of anthrax in animals. Iva Pem Novosel, PhD, from the Croatian Institute of Public Health, pointed out that chemoprophylaxis with antibiotics was administered in 129 people potentially exposed to the agent.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of the Republic of Croatia has adopted measures to combat anthrax in the



Split-Dalmatia and Šibenik-Knin counties. These measures were discussed by Lucija Stupar, dr. med. vet., from the Veterinary and Food Safety Directorate of the Ministry.

The lecture entitled African swine fever in Croatia - yesterday, today, tomorrow, was presented by Prof. Lorena Jemeršić, PhD, from the Croatian Veterinary Institute. She emphasized that the first appearance of African swine fever (ASF) in Croatia was recorded in 2023 in domestic pigs and wild boars. During 2024 and until July 2025, ASF appeared in several herds of domestic pigs. However, since July 2025, a new epizootic wave of ASF has occurred in domestic and wild boars, primarily in Osijek-Baranja County and with sporadic outbreaks in Vukovar-Syrmia County. It was caused by a highly virulent virus of genotype II, subtype 19.

Wild boars play an important role in the spread and maintenance of the African swine fever virus. Prof. Dean Konjević, PhD, from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Zagreb spoke about wild boar population control in Croatia. To combat ASF, 50030 wild boars were shot in Croatia in 2023.

The management of the appearance of ASF in Croatia was based on the principle of prompt action and flexible risk management.

For the purpose of management and coordination at the central level, a national crisis headquarters and local crisis headquarters were established for operational action on the field. Žaklin Acinger-Rogić, PhD, from the Veterinary and Food Safety Directorate spoke about these measures.

As for outbreaks of bluetongue disease in 2025 in Croatia, the circulation of serotype BTV 4, which has been present in Croatia for several years, was determined. The new serotypes BTV 3 and BTV 8 were also determined. Eddy Listeš, PhD, from the Croatian Veterinary Institute, Department Split, spoke about these findings.

Mario Rumišek, mag. ecol. et prot. nat., from the Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, spoke about insects of the Ceratopogonidae family, genus *Culicoides*, which females are vectors of bluetongue virus.

Martina Rubin, dr. med. vet., from the Veterinary and Food Safety Directorate presented veterinary and administrative measures for the control of bluetongue disease in the Republic of Croatia. Vaccination and vector control is recommended. However, they are carried out voluntarily and at the owner's expense.

After each of the three lecture blocks, a broad discussion was held on the topics covered.

