

News story: Measles: why it is necessary to eliminate the disease in Europe

Several measles outbreaks are ongoing in Europe and until the disease is eradicated worldwide, cross-border transmission between countries is possible and will likely continue to occur.

The President of the Italian National Health Institute, Walter Ricciardi, and the Director of PHE, Duncan Selbie, have stressed that measles elimination in Europe is an objective that needs to be vigorously pursued.

Measles can cause severe complications including encephalitis, pneumonia and even death, and is now a target for elimination in all World Health Organization (WHO) regions.

The European Region adopted the goal of eliminating measles in the entire Region by 2015 but this objective was not met. According to WHO data, in 2017, 22,373 measles cases were reported in the region, including 35 deaths.

Measles outbreaks are still occurring in a number of European countries, including Ukraine, Serbia, Russia, Albania, Italy, France, Greece and UK and in total, 21,478 cases have been reported to date since January 2018.

In Italy, 5,400 cases were reported in 2017 and 1,716 cases between 1 January 2018 and 31 May 2018. Most cases occurred in young adults but the highest incidence was seen in infants under one year of age. In total 8 measles-related deaths have been reported in Italy since January 2017.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of PHE, said:

Until measles is eliminated from all WHO regions, cross-border transmission of cases is likely to occur when unvaccinated individuals travel to countries where measles is circulating, become infected and travel back to their home country – thus importing the measles virus.

Professor Walter Ricciardi, President of the Italian National Health Institute said:

Recently, some measles clusters in England have been linked to importations from Europe. Since 2017, 7 measles cases have been imported into England from Italy (3 in 2017 and 4 in 2018). Importations from the UK to Italy have also occurred: since January 2018, 4 measles cases in Italy have been imported from the UK, leading to 2 small measles clusters.

The only effective way to protect yourself and your community against measles is by vaccination. This is because measles is one of the most infectious diseases known to man – it spreads easily through direct contact and droplets in the air. The measles virus survives up to 2 hours in the air or surfaces, even after an infected person has left the area.

Cases of measles are most infectious in the first 3 days before the onset of rash, so infection can be spread before anyone suspects the case.

Raising awareness of measles circulation in many European countries is important to encourage the public to check their vaccination status before travelling abroad. The European Centre for Disease Control, the Royal College of GPs and the Royal College of Nurses have also recently reminded people to check their MMR status before travelling.

Two doses of measles-containing vaccine are nearly 100% effective in preventing the disease. Achieving high vaccine coverage (over 95%) will help to protect the whole community, including babies vulnerable children who cannot be vaccinated, by reducing the risk of measles spreading in the population.

[Press release: Sentences increased for gang who illegally sold thousands of farmed puppies](#)

Four men have today had their sentences increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, personally presented their cases to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

Simon O'Donnell, Thomas Stokes, Edward Stokes, and Daniel Doherty were part of a puppy-farming conspiracy thought to have raised around £2 million. O'Donnell, Thomas Stokes and Edward Stokes were involved in importing farmed puppies from abroad; while Doherty, a vet who practised in West London, provided them with misleading welfare documents, including immunisation certificates, which were used to reassure the people who bought the puppies.

Many of the supposedly healthy puppies sold by this group became unwell, leaving their owners with significant veterinary bills, or even the traumatic decision of whether to have them euthanised.

O'Donnell, Doherty, and Thomas Stokes were originally sentenced at Isleworth Crown Court in May, Edward Stokes in June. O'Donnell and Thomas Stokes both received 3 years' imprisonment. Edward Stokes received 2 years' imprisonment suspended for two years, as well as conditions of 200 hours unpaid work and 15 days rehabilitation activity. Doherty received 12 months' imprisonment

suspended for 12 months, as well as a requirement of 80 hours unpaid work.

Today, after the Solicitor General's referral, the Court of Appeal increased all 4 sentences. Thomas Stokes' sentence was increased to 4 years 8 months, and O'Donnell's sentenced was increased to 4 years imprisonment.

The other 2 offenders have now been given immediate prison terms. E Stokes had his suspended sentence increased to 4 years 8 months imprisonment, Doherty's suspended sentence was increased to 3 years 6 months imprisonment.

Commenting on the sentencing increases, the Solicitor General said:

This group not only subjected thousands of puppies to atrocious living conditions, but also caused immense distress to families who had to watch their new pets suffer from serious illness. I am pleased that the Court of Appeal has today agreed to increase all 4 sentences, and hope this will bring some comfort to the victims of their crimes.

[News story: Open call for sponsors and partners of the London Illegal Wildlife Trade \(IWT\) Conference](#)

The UK government is hosting an [international conference about the illegal wildlife trade](#) on 11 to 12 October 2018. The conference will bring together global leaders to help eradicate the illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world's most iconic species from the threat of extinction.

Organisations interested in sponsoring the IWT London Conference 2018 or related activities are invited to get in touch.

Benefits of sponsorship for companies

Sponsorship offers a unique platform for companies to:

- gain commercial exposure through a strategically important international event
- showcase the very best of their brand and its relevance in combating IWT
- align with the key objectives of the conference and its underpinning values

Packages available to companies

Packages available to businesses span direct financial and/or value in kind

support in the form of a free product or service for the event. All ideas for significant sponsorship would be welcome.

Contact for expressions of interest

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Contact for expressions of interest

Contact IWTconference@defra.gov.uk by Tuesday 31 July 2018.

Press release: Environment Agency supports water restrictions in the North West

The Environment Agency supports United Utilities plans for water restrictions across the North West to help reduce demand for water during this period of prolonged dry weather and protect the environment as well as public water supplies.

Although the region has seen some periods of rainfall in localised areas, over two very dry months, we have seen a rapid decline in reservoir levels in the North West and we have started to see significant impacts on the local environment.

The Environment Agency uses regulatory powers to manage water availability to maintain essential supplies for people and the environment and have been responding to impacts on the environment due to the dry weather over the last few months. Environment Agency teams have stepped up incident response as well as regulation of those abstracting water to ensure the environment is protected.

Environment Agency teams respond 24/7 to environmental incidents to protect people and the environment and have received a sharp increase in reports of environmental incidents in the North West, with 25 per cent of July's estimated reports received in just the first three days.

Incidents can either be caused or exacerbated by the hot, dry conditions – such as fish in distress, or fish caught in pools due to flow flows, reports of Blue-Green algae, or moorland fires. Teams have been carrying out fish rescues, including one in Borrowdale, Cumbria, on Saturday and attending fish kill incidents exacerbated by dry conditions, such as that at Pigs Lee Brook, Bury, Greater Manchester, on Friday.

Environment Agency teams are meeting with affected groups including farmers to provide practical advice about conserving water and planning for prolonged dry weather. We have carried out abstraction licence checks, visited critical spray irrigators, carried out water abstraction visits, advised businesses and farmers on water usage, and inspected rivers where the flows are lowest.

Hydropower turbines have been checked for compliance including fish-pass and weir flows, and we have been on site monitoring air quality in response to the Saddleworth moorland fires. Teams are monitoring for environmental impacts across the region, and taking action to protect the environment.

Jim Ratcliffe, Environment Agency Drought Manager, said:

United Utilities plans for a temporary usage ban is a responsible measure to help preserve public water supplies and protect the

environment given the impacts we are seeing from the dry weather.

Household water restrictions such as those proposed by United Utilities can reduce the demand for water by up to 10% – which is significantly more than changes to abstraction permits, or using other sources. This will help us balance the need of people through public water supplies, whilst protecting the sensitive natural environment.

Each week, our hydrology experts monitor river flows and groundwater to see how much water there is and plan accordingly. Just like in a flood scenario, we have put robust and well tested plans in place during this period of dry weather, ensuring our demand for water is managed in the best possible way.

Water is a precious resource and we always advise that businesses, farmers and householders use water wisely – especially during a period of dry weather – and to follow the advice of their water company. We all need to increase the amount of water we save to protect our natural environment and drinking water supplies.

As always, if people see any environmental impacts due to dry weather, such as fish in distress, please report it to the Environment Agency incident line on 0800 80 70 60 so we can investigate and take action.

The Environment Agency continues to work with United Utilities to ensure that, at all times, we make the best use of the water available and minimise any potential impacts to people, the environment and tourism should the dry weather continue.

Cumbria's unique geography makes it sensitive to high and low rainfall and the Environment Agency works with communities throughout the year to manage this.

During dry spells it's not unusual for some rivers and lakes in the North West to deplete quickly, during even short periods of low rainfall, and they tend to recover quickly when the rain returns.

If we have intense rainfall on dry or compacted ground it runs off rapidly making river levels rise rapidly. This can cause localised flooding so it is possible to have floods during prolonged dry periods.