



DEFEND NEWSLETTER #1

FEBRUARY 2019

DEFEND is a consortium of 30 scientific partners from academia, industry and government working together to halt the emergence of two viral pathogens of livestock into Europe and neighbouring countries – **African swine fever virus (ASFV) and lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV)**.

The aim of DEFEND is to control ASFV and LSDV by understanding the drivers behind their emergence, and by generating research outputs which underpin novel diagnostic tools and vaccines, and authenticate appropriate and rapid responses by decision-makers.

DEFEND key facts

Start date: June 2018

Duration: 5 years

Budget: 5.6 million EUR

Coordinator: Dr Pip Beard,

The Pirbright Institute, UK

Website: www.defend2020.eu

Email: defend@pirbright.ac.uk

Welcome to the first DEFEND newsletter!

DEFEND is a new EU funded research project and we are delighted to bring you our first newsletter. The DEFEND newsletter will be produced every six months for the duration of the project and sent to you, our stakeholders, to keep you up to date with the progress and outputs of the consortium. This issue includes key facts about the project, the latest news, and a profile of one of our consortium partners.

We hope you enjoy finding out about DEFEND!

Best regards,
Dr Pip Beard, The Pirbright Institute, UK
On behalf of the DEFEND consortium

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NEWS

Project update – focus on impact

Understanding and preventing the emergence and spread of animal pathogens in Europe is the central aim of the DEFEND consortium. The timeliness and importance of our research programme has been highlighted in recent months by reports of the spread of ASFV to China and Belgium, and by the cost calculations arising from LSDV outbreaks in Europe and neighbouring countries in 2016-2018. New ways of combatting these and other emerging animal diseases are clearly needed.

In order to ensure DEFEND contributes to new and more effective ways of combatting emerging animal diseases, the project has a planned programme of dissemination. This is to ensure our research findings reach end users and are translated into new products, management tools, improved strategies for disease control, and other applications, achieving maximum impact from the DEFEND research.

As part of the dissemination programme, a DEFEND Multi-Actor Panel (MAP) has been appointed. The MAP consists of external experts who will provide advice and support towards the aim of ensuring the dissemination and exploitation of DEFEND outputs. The dissemination programme also includes Knowledge Exchange Awards which will be available each year to DEFEND partners to support them in specific efforts to disseminate their findings.



DEFEND kick-off meeting held at The Pirbright Institute



Defend kick-off meeting at The Pirbright Institute

The DEFEND consortium kick-off meeting took place at The Pirbright Institute on 27-28 September 2018. Over 40 participants from 25 of the partner organisations, from countries across Europe, as well as South Africa and Canada, participated.

Day 1 began with an overview and update of the project by Dr Pip Beard (the project co-ordinator), followed by introductions from the partners. The rest of the day focused on the science work packages, with presentations from each of the work package leaders. These were followed by in-depth discussions to plan the next steps and the collaborations required.

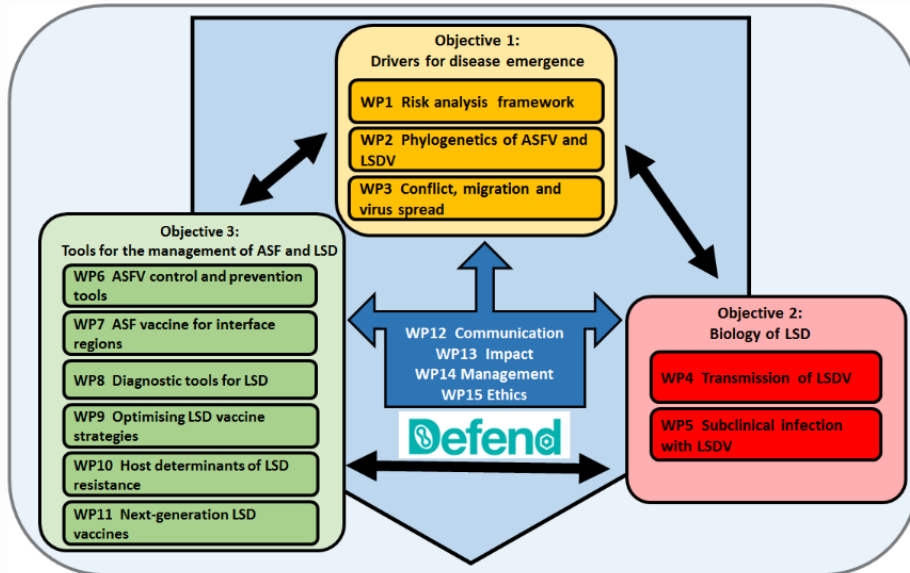
Day 2 focused on the DEFEND working procedures. This included a discussion on the participation and promotion of women in science. Female leadership is highly visible in DEFEND, with a female lead and 50% female representation at the kick-off meeting. Tools for promoting women and science and how to ensure a gender balance throughout the project were discussed.

Everybody found the meeting useful for progressing their work on DEFEND and for building relationships with people that they will be collaborating closely with for the next five years. The meeting was a great success, with interesting presentations, lively discussions and a spirit of collegiality!

For more information on supporting women in science, please visit the DEFEND website

<https://defend2020.eu/women-in-science/>

Work starts on DEFEND work packages



DEFEND is organised into three scientific objectives, with 11 scientific work packages. This is combined with four cross-cutting work packages (communication, impact, management and ethics). Work has now started on each of the work packages and we will report on progress in future newsletters.

For more information on the DEFEND work packages, please visit <https://defend2020.eu/work-packages/>

PARTNER FOCUS

In each newsletter we ask one of our partners to describe their organisation, research and role in DEFEND.



Partner: Azerbaijan Food Safety Agency (Republican Veterinary Laboratory)
Country: Azerbaijan

Description of organisation

The Republican Veterinary Laboratory (RVL) is located in the city of Baku (capital of Azerbaijan). It is equipped with BSL-2 facilities and a newly established BSL-3 Central Reference Laboratory (CRL). The RVL and CRL are a public organisation, operated under the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan and funded by the state budget.

Description of research / area of expertise

The main purpose is:

- diagnosis of infectious diseases
- investigation of pathogens
- research of new and exotic pathogens
- virus identification
- safe storage of strains

Role in DEFEND

- WP2 Phylogenetics of ASFV and LSDV
- WP10 Host determinants of LSD resistance and susceptibility

Key people working on DEFEND

Shalala Zeynalova (WP2 and WP10)
Shebnem Huseynova (WP2)
Gulnara Aliyeva (WP10)



Vet Lab Team, Azerbaijan