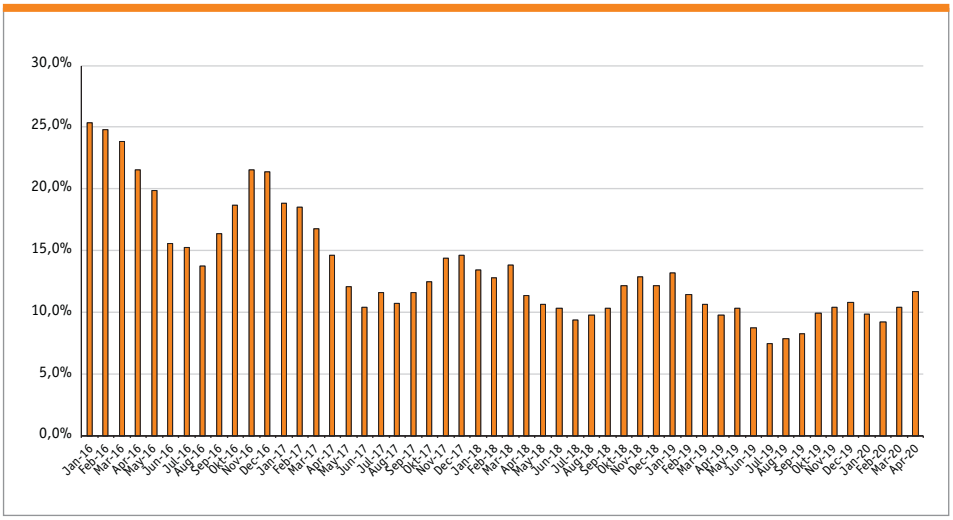
Monitoring ANIMAL HEALTH

Trends in the monitor: Online Monitor results

As part of the Online Monitor, every month pig veterinarians report whether there are any health issues at 3,100 farms on average. Since 2018, around 200 veterinarians from 90 different practices have reported each month. The number of reports remains fairly stable over time. Health issues were reported at approximately 35 percent of the farms visited. Most of the health issues relate to weaned piglets (51%) and only 14% of the reports relate to sows. The interactive Online Monitor dashboard became available to veterinarians from mid-July. It enables veterinary practitioners to make their own analysis of the health issues and probability diagnoses that have been reported at farms within their own practice, versus the region and the rest of the Netherlands. Individual farmers receive a monthly overview of the situation at their farm versus the region and the rest of the Netherlands.

Trend in respiratory issues

The number of questions put to the Veekijker regarding respiratory issues was relatively high in the first quarter of 2020. However, this was not reflected in the number of reports in the Online Monitor. The number of reports of respiratory issues is always higher in the winter period than in the summer period, but the figures were not higher than expected during the (mild) winter of 2020, versus previous years (see Figure).



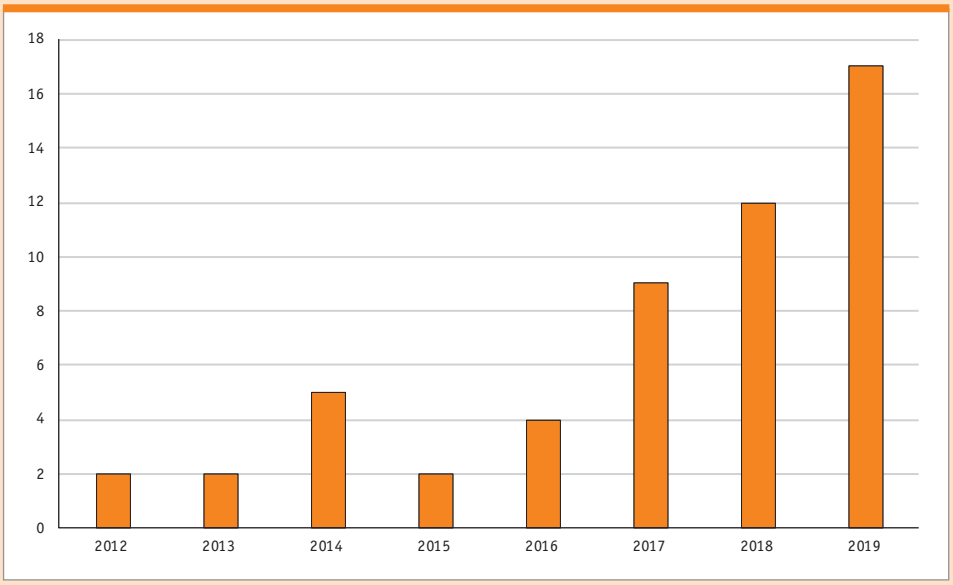
However, a large number of pigs were submitted for pathological examination with an *Actinobacillus pleuropneumoniae* (App) infection in the first quarter. The percentage of reports of App in the Online Monitor as a probability diagnosis in the case of respiratory issues was also slightly above average in the first quarter, versus the first quarter of previous years.

There was a rising trend in the percentage of reports of PRRS as the most probable cause in the first quarter, but this did not represent a strikingly large percentage of all reports. This is also in contrast to the many questions put to the Veekijker regarding PRRS.

The Veekijker received a number of calls with the question of whether pigs could become infected with SARS-CoV2. This is highly unlikely.

Abnormal findings

Sow mortality due to liver lobe torsion
A sow farm experienced increased mortality in sows in the spring. Over the course of the first quarter of 2020, a total of five dead sows were submitted to the GD laboratory for pathological examination. Blood tests were also conducted in order to check for any metabolic diseases. The first sow submitted was found to have chronic brain damage, which could not be directly linked to acute mortality. There were no clear indications for any intoxication or infectious disease. The second and third sows submitted had a partial liver torsion (liver lobe torsion). The abdomen contained a large amount of bloody fluid, most likely caused by a rupture in the liver. The fourth sow had chronic brain damage, while the fifth had a liver lobe torsion. Blood tests indicated issues with calcium absorption but also with poor feed intake in general. Furthermore, blood samples submitted for a number of the sows clearly showed serious liver issues. When considering the frequent diagnosis of liver lobe torsions and because the results of the blood test indicated serious liver issues in at least some of the animals, it was concluded that liver lobe torsion was probably the cause of the increased mortality rate. The significance of the chronic brain damage has not yet been clarified in relation to the sow mortality rate. It could be a separate issue or possibly also the result of the liver damage.
In comparison with a number of years ago, the GD pathologists diagnose liver lobe torsion more frequently. In the first quarter of 2020, the diagnosis was made seven times. The number of diagnoses has clearly increased in the period from 2012 through 2019 (see Figure). In Flanders, Flemish animal health organisation DierenGezondheidsZorg has also reported a relative increase in liver lobe torsions in recent years.
Risk factors for the occurrence of liver lobe torsions include feeding only once daily, uncontrolled and irregular feed intake, and the feeding of (large volumes of) wet feed with a high liquid content. Sows who have recently farrowed are apparently at greater risk.



Number of liver lobe torsions established by pathological examination of sows at GD (2012-2019)

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Animal health of pigs in the Netherlands

Disease/disorder/health characteristic	Situation in the Netherlands/Europe
Article 15 diseases (compulsory notification and eradication)	
Foot and mouth disease (FMD)	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 2001. No outbreaks in Europe in the 1st quarter of 2020, but an outbreak in Turkey.
Classical Swine Fever (CSF)	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 1997. No outbreaks in Europe in the 1st quarter of 2020.
African Swine Fever (ASF)	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 1986. Very many outbreaks in Eastern-Europe in the 1st quarter of 2020, including in the western part of Poland. The situation in Belgium is under control.
Swine Vesicular Disease (SVD)	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 1994. No outbreaks in Europe in the 1st quarter of 2020.
Brucellosis	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 1969. No outbreaks in Europe in the 1st quarter of 2020.
Aujeszky's disease	The Netherlands has been disease-free since 2007 (vaccination is prohibited). An outbreak in France in the 1st trimester of 2020.
Article 100 diseases (compulsory notification)	
Salmonellosis	Number of questions put to the Veekijker remains stable
From the monitor: trends and abnormalities	
PRRS	Very many questions to the Veekijker, no increase in the number of diagnoses made
Circovirus	Increase in the number of questions
App	Often found during pathological examination, frequent reports in the Online Monitor
Lameness	Most questions to the Veekijker, for example in relation to the provision of vitamin D3
Respiratory issues	Increase in the number of questions, but no increase in the number of reports in the Online Monitor

Monitoring ANIMAL HEALTH

Animal health monitoring

Since 2002, Royal GD has been responsible for animal health monitoring in the Netherlands, in close collaboration with the veterinary sectors, the business community, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, vets and farmers. The information used for the surveillance programme is gathered in various ways, whereby the initiative comes in part from vets and farmers, and partly from GD Animal Health. This information is fully interpreted to achieve the objectives of the surveillance programme – rapid identification of health issues on the one hand and monitoring trends and developments on the other. Together, we team up for animal health, in the interests of animals, their owners and society at large.

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