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1 **Polymorphism of the *alpha-1-fucosyltransferase (FUT1)* gene in several wild boar (*Sus scrofa*)**
2 **populations in France and link to edema disease**

3

4

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25

26 **Abstract**

27 Background: In 2013, an outbreak of edema disease in a population of wild boars (*Sus scrofa*)
28 took place. This was the first described case as reported worldwide . An enterotoxigenic
29 *Escherichia coli* (presenting the Stx2e and F18 virulence factors) is the main pathogen for this
30 disease in wild boar. The alpha-1-fucosyltransferase gene (*FUT1*) has been identified as the
31 gene regulating the expression of the receptor for *E. coli* stx2e F18 bacteria in domestic pigs
32 affected by the disease. The genotypic frequencies of the *FUT1* gene in European wild boars
33 have not yet been investigated. The genotypes of wild boars for this gene were determined in
34 four French departments with or without edema diseases cases.

35 Results: All of the wild boars analysed had a genotype susceptible to the disease (GG or AG).
36 The recessive, resistant A allele was found for the first time in wild boars, but in a very small
37 proportion of individuals (7/222). No statistical differences were found between healthy
38 hunted wild boars versus wild boars found dead by edema disease or among the four French
39 departments.

40 Conclusions: These results suggest that further mortality due to edema disease remains
41 possible in wild boars in France.

42 **Introduction**

43 In July 2013, an abnormal mortality wave in wild boars (*Sus scrofa*) was detected in the
44 department of Ardèche in France (ten individuals found dead in the same commune over a
45 period of 15 days). These wild boars presented distinct neurological disorders. Following
46 numerous analyses (autopsy, bacteriology, toxicology, histology) and the discovery of an
47 enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* stx2e F18 belonging to serogroup O139K82, edema disease
48 emerged as the only explanation for this unusual mortality wave. The disease continued to

49 progress in Ardèche from July 2013 to December 2013, with 109 cases of suspect deaths in 45
50 communes in central Ardèche [1]. Starting in 2014, the detection of suspect cases evoking the
51 disease began to decrease year by year. However, in 2016 a second outbreak occurred in
52 France. Seventy-five wild boars were found dead in the Albères mountain range in the
53 department of Pyrénées-Orientales. Bacteriological and histological analyses led to the
54 diagnosis of edema disease [2]. The wild boars that were found dying and infected by edema
55 disease presented similar neurological clinical signs, including paddling movements, ataxia,
56 convulsions and trembling, as well as impairments such as transient swelling of eyelids. They
57 were mainly young animals between 4 to 6-months old, which corresponds to the weaning
58 period in wild boars [1]. To our knowledge, these are the first cases of mortality caused by
59 edema disease in a population of wild suidae. It is therefore of utmost importance to
60 understand the origin of these cases by identifying the underlying genetic risk factors.

61 The alpha-1-fucosyltransferase gene (*FUT1*) was identified as the gene regulating the
62 expression of the F18 receptor in the host of the bacteria causing ED [3, 4]. A single
63 nucleotide polymorphism (G/A M307 mutation) leading to the Ala → Thr amino acid
64 substitution at position 103 of the protein has been identified in this gene [5]. Studies have
65 been conducted to assess the effects of the three possible genotypes [6, 7]. Following
66 experimental inoculation of *E. coli* F18 serogroup O138 to 14 resistant (AA genotype) and 17
67 susceptible (AG or GG) pigs, 71.4% of the susceptible individuals developed clinical signs
68 while only 5.9% of the resistant individuals did so [7]. The AA genotype thus induces better
69 resistance to infection by ETEC (enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*) *E. coli* stx2e F18 while
70 the AG and GG genotypes are more susceptible to infection by *E. coli* stx2e F18, the G allele
71 being dominant in relation to the A allele [8, 9]. The expression of this gene depends on the
72 age of the piglet [10]. Indeed, Bao *et al.* demonstrated in 2012 that its expression is most
73 important at the time of weaning (between 3-6 weeks after birth in domestic pigs) [11].

74 Numerous studies have been conducted to estimate the frequency of the different alleles and
75 genotypes in various pig breeds, particularly Asian and European ones [3, 12–17].
76 Conversely, very few comparable studies have been carried out in wild boar populations [3,
77 18, 19]. Those studies involved only Asian individuals and suggest that the G allele has a
78 frequency of 100% [3, 18, 19]. Two studies concluded that the three genotypes, AA, AG and
79 GG, were represented in European pig breeds with fairly significant frequencies while the
80 majority of Asian pig breeds had genotype GG (susceptible), although low frequencies of
81 genotype AG (susceptible) were detected in several Asian pig breeds. As European domestic
82 pigs originated from the domestication of European wild boars (and Asian domestic pigs
83 originated from the domestication of Asian wild boars), the authors suggested that the
84 resistant allele came from European wild boars [3, 16].

85 In light of the emergence of edema disease in wild boar populations, and with a view to limit
86 its impact on domestic pig populations when there are interactions between pigs and wild
87 boars, it is important to determine the potential genetic susceptibility of wild boar populations
88 as a risk factor for this disease. In the present study, we estimated the frequencies of the three
89 genotypes for the *FUT1* gene in different French wild boar samples from two departments
90 where edema disease has been detected, and from two other departments where the disease is
91 assumed to be absent. The genotype and allele frequencies in wild boars, as well as in
92 different domestic pig breeds, were compared with the literature data. Finally the
93 compatibility of wild boars' genetics with edema disease and consequential epidemiological
94 implications as well as potential factors and mechanisms underlying variation in *FUT1* alleles
95 frequencies among wild and domestic suidae are discussed in light of the results.

96

97 **Materials and methods**

98 **Samples**

99 Between 2013 and 2017, 222 samples (ear tissue or spleen) were taken from wild boars
100 (hunted healthy animals n = 178 or animals that died of edema disease n = 44) in four French
101 departments (Figure 1) using opportunistic and targeted sampling.

102 The auricular samples (ear tips) were taken by hunters in the different departments as well as
103 by technicians from departmental hunting federations. Once collected, the samples were
104 frozen at -20°C to conserve them.

105 In Ardèche, all of the auricular samples (Figure 2) were collected in areas where there had
106 been outbreaks of edema disease in wild boars. Of these, 41 were from wild boars suspected
107 (or confirmed) to have been affected by edema disease between 2013 and 2015. In 2014 and
108 2016, samples were collected from respectively 64 and 48 hunted wild boars which presented
109 no sign of the disease.

110 In the Pyrénées-Orientales, all of the samples (Figure 3) also came from disease-affected
111 areas. These included three spleen specimens taken from wild boars which had died of edema
112 disease in 2016, and 17 ear tissue specimens taken from wild boars which showed no sign of
113 the disease and which were hunted between January and February 2017.

114 The two departments in which no cases of edema disease have been detected are Lozère
115 (Figure 4) and Hérault (Figure 5). Their wild boar biogeographic and population
116 characteristics are relatively similar to those of Ardèche and Pyrénées-Orientales. They were
117 used as control territories, with 19 ear tissue samples taken from wild boars hunted in 2014
118 for Lozère, and 30 tissue samples (25 spleen and 5 ear) from wild boars killed during the
119 2016-2017 hunting season for Hérault.

120

121 **Edema disease diagnostics in wild boars**

122 Edema disease was diagnosed in wild boars using the following criteria. The location where
123 the diseased wild boar or the wild boar carcass was discovered was considered. A diseased
124 animal or a carcass discovered in the same commune as or in a commune adjacent to a
125 commune where a confirmed edema disease case had already been recorded less than two
126 months before was considered as suspicion of an edema disease case. Clinical signs and
127 lesions recorded at the time of discovery or during the autopsy were also considered. The
128 clinical signs on a live wild boar considered as indicative of an edema disease case were
129 shakings/convulsions, pedalling, ataxia and lateral decubitus. The lesions observed during the
130 autopsy of a dead wild boar considered as indicative of an edema disease case were edema on
131 eye lids or in the mesocolon, thoracic, abdominal or pericardial effusions and congestive
132 haemorrhagic colitis. Bacterial analyses were also undertaken on the content of the digestive
133 tractus. The isolation and identification of O139k82 or O141k85 *Escherichia coli* was
134 considered as a confirmation of an edema disease case. Finally, histological analyses were
135 undertaken to detect neuronal vacuolisation which was also considered as a confirmation of
136 an edema disease case. Table 1 shows the different combinations of criteria that lead to strong
137 suspicions or confirmations of edema disease cases.

138 *Table 1. Number of samples for each analysis*

Edema disease diagnostics	Sample
Histological and bacteriological analyses, clinical signs, location of wild boar corpses	6/44
Histological analyses, clinical signs, location of wild boar corpses	1/44
Bacteriological analyses, clinical signs, location of wild boar corpses	18/44
Clinical signs, location of wild boar corpses	19/44

139

140

141 **Genotyping**

142 DNA was extracted using the Nucleospin Tissue kit (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany). The
143 polymorphism of the *FUT1* gene was then determined using PCR (polymerase chain
144 reaction). The primers F 3'-TGCATGGCAGGCTGGATGAAG-5' and R 3'-
145 CCAACGCCTCCGATTCCTGTC-5' were used as the sequence coding for the sequence of
146 the gene FUT1 of GenBank. Amplification by PCR (final volume = 50 µl) was done using 25
147 µl of taq polymerase (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA), 1 µl of each primer at
148 10 µM, and 22 µl of water, with 1 µl containing approximately 200 ng of DNA. The PCR
149 conditions were: 94°C for 3 minutes, followed by 50 cycles (at 94°C for 1 minute, 53°C 1
150 minute, 72°C 1 minute), and then 72°C for 3 minutes. The PCR products were then purified
151 by migration on gel electrophoresis (2% agarose + 7 µl of SYBR Safe stain for 100 ml of gel).
152 After migration, the purified DNA was extracted using the NucleoSpin® Gel and PCR Clean-
153 up kit (Macherey-Nagel, Düren, Germany). The purified DNA was then sequenced by the
154 GATC laboratory. The obtained sequences were read using the Chromas lite software. For the
155 susceptible allele G sequence was CCTGGCGCAG while the resistant allele A, its sequence
156 was CCTGACGCAG.

157

158 **Bibliographic synthesis**

159 A bibliographic synthesis was undertaken to obtain the maximum amount of data on the
160 frequencies of different genotypes and alleles of the *FUT1* gene (Appendix). This
161 bibliographic synthesis was conducted using Google Scholar, PubMed, and ScienceDirect
162 search engines. The key words used were (i) pig, (ii) wild boar, (iii) FUT1 and (iv) alpha-1-

163 fucosyltransferase. More specifically, the query was: (“pig” or “wild boar”) and (“FUT1” or
164 “alpha-1-fucosyltransferase”). Only articles that were in English and presenting genotype and
165 allele frequencies in the populations studied were retained. The geographic origins of different
166 pig breeds were then identified and classified in three main groups: America (combining
167 Central and North American pigs), Europe and Asia. The same procedure was used for wild
168 boar; with Asian and Russian wild boars regrouped under the name Asian wild boar.

169 **Statistical analyses**

170

171 **Variations in genotype and allele frequencies in wild boar populations in** 172 **France**

173 The null hypothesis of frequency homogeneity (genotype or allele) between the departments
174 where wild boars were sampled in France was tested by applying Fisher’s exact test to
175 contingency tables displaying geographical origin and genotype or allele. This same test was
176 used to test the null hypothesis of frequency homogeneity between French wild boars
177 suspected of being infected by edema disease and other French wild boars that are *a priori* not
178 infected.

179

180 **Variations of allele frequencies between different types (wild boar and** 181 **various breeds of domestic wild boar) of *Sus scrofa***

182 In addition, a more comprehensive analysis was undertaken of variations in allele frequencies
183 that combined the data collected in French wild boar populations with data from the literature
184 on allele frequencies of other wild boar populations and of different domestic pig breeds. To

185 do this, a generalized linear model (GLM) was fitted in which the binomial response variable
 186 was the frequency of the A allele (number of A alleles relative to the total number of typed
 187 alleles). The GLM included the fixed effect of a categorical variable with 5 modalities
 188 (European or Asian wild boars, and American, Asian, or European domestic pigs). In this
 189 model, each combination of breed and origin (each line of the table in the annex) was
 190 considered as a statistical unit. A post-hoc Tukey test was then performed to make pairwise
 191 comparisons between the different categories. The statistical analyses were conducted using R
 192 software, and more precisely with the “multcomp” package for the post-hoc Tukey test.

193

194 **Results**

195

196 **Polymorphism of the FUT1 gene in different French wild boar** 197 **populations (experimental data)**

198 The digestion of the PCR products produced fragments of 109 nucleotides. The genotype and
 199 allele frequencies in the samples studied are presented in Table 2 below.

200 *Table 2. Genotype and allele frequencies of the FUT1 gene in different wild boar populations in France*

Sample location	Suspect ED / hunted	Sample size	Genotype frequency (sample size)			Allele frequency	
			AA Resistant	AG Susceptible	GG Susceptible	A Resistant	G Susceptible
Ardèche	ED	41	0 (0)	0.049 (2)	0.951 (39)	0.024	0.976
	Hunted	112	0 (0)	0.027 (3)	0.973 (109)	0.014	0.986
Pyrénées-Orientales	ED	3	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (3)	0	1
	Hunted	17	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (17)	0	1
Lozère	Hunted	19	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (19)	0	1
Hérault	Hunted	30	0 (0)	0.067 (2)	0.933 (28)	0.033	0.967

France (total)	ED / Hunted	222	0 (0)	0.032 (7)	0.968 (215)	0.016	0.984
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201 ED : Edema disease

202

203 The resistant AA genotype was not detected in any of the boars sampled. AG heterozygotes
 204 were detected at a low frequency in only two departments (5/153 in Ardèche and 2/30 in
 205 Hérault), whereas the animals from the other two departments only had the homozygous GG
 206 genotype. The GG genotype thus is largely predominant in the wild boars sampled. The
 207 frequencies of the different genotypes of the *FUT1* gene of the wild boars sampled in France
 208 do not vary significantly according to the department (Fisher's exact test $p > 0.05$). These
 209 frequencies also do not vary significantly according to the animal's status with regard to
 210 edema disease (test limited to the samples from Ardèche and Pyrénées Orientales, Fisher's
 211 exact test $p > 0.05$).

212 The frequency of the resistant A allele therefore is very low among the sampled European
 213 wild boars (0.016) irrespective of the edema disease status and the department.

214

215 **Comparison of allele frequencies between pig and wild boar**
 216 **breeds of different origins (synthesis of data from the literature –**
 217 **Appendix)**

218 The averages of the allele frequencies appear to be different depending on the origin of the
 219 animals (Table 3).

220 *Table 3. FUT1 allele frequencies for pigs and wild boar breeds of different origins*

	American pig (n = 422)	European pig (n = 2874)	Asian pig (n = 2316)	Asian wild boar (n = 136)	French wild boar (our study)
--	---------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------------

					(n = 222)
A allele	0.333	0.245	0.020	0	0.016
G allele	0.667	0.755	0.98	1	0.984

221

222 The GLM model shows that the allele frequency depends on the origin of the animals. Indeed,
 223 the explanatory variable "Origin" is highly significant (Table 4). Only the difference in allele
 224 frequency between French wild boars and Asian wild boars is not significant. However, due
 225 to the fact that no allele A was detected for the Asian wild boar category, the estimate of the
 226 parameter associated with this category is strongly negative on the logit scale with a very
 227 large standard error. This well-known artefact for parameters estimated near the bounds (0 or
 228 1) in GLMs compromises the validity of statistical comparison tests with this category.
 229 However, the frequency of the resistant A allele is lowest in Asian wild boars, followed by
 230 French wild boars and Asian pig breeds, and then European pig breeds. The frequency of the
 231 resistant A allele is the highest in American domestic pig breeds.

232 *Table 4. Results of the GLM model*

	GLM(A-origin), family=binomial		
	Estimate	Std.error	P-value
French wild boar	Reference		
European pig	2.970	0.018	<2.2 x 10 ⁻¹⁶ ***
American pig	3.602	0.020	<2.2 x 10 ⁻¹⁶ ***
Asian wild boar	-14.339*	32.285	0.657
Asian pig	1.400	0.020	<2.2 x 10 ⁻¹⁶ ***

233

234 These results were confirmed using the post-hoc test (Table 5), which enabled us to refine the
 235 comparisons of allele frequencies between the different origins of domestic pigs and wild
 236 boars.

237 *Table 5. Results of the post-hoc test*

	French wild boar	Asian pig	European pig
Asian pig	1.400±0.019***	---	
European pig	2.970±0.018***	1.570±0.006***	---
American pig	3.601±0.020***	2.202±0.009***	0.632±0.007***

238 Estimate±Std.error *** p<0.001

239

240 **Discussion**

241

242 **Wild boar genetics compatible with the emergence of edema** 243 **disease?**

244

245 The very low frequency of the A allele (0.016) in the wild boars sampled in four French
246 departments is in line with the results reported in the literature for Asian wild boars [3, 18, 19].
247 These results suggest that wild boars are susceptible to edema disease, yet no case of
248 mortality due to this disease had been recorded prior to the episode reported in France in
249 2013. It is possible that mortality caused by this disease existed without being detected, or that
250 it was under-diagnosed. In France, for example, certain group mortality events in wild boars
251 remain unexplained (personal communication: SAGIR). An alternative hypothesis
252 explaining the absence of documented cases of edema disease in wild boars is a recent
253 exposure to enterotoxigenic *E. coli* stx2e F18. If indeed these strains come from domestic
254 pigs, the rapid increase in wild boar populations in France [20] and the rising number of
255 French open-air pig farms [21] may have enabled an increase in direct and indirect contacts
256 between pigs and wild boars, thereby favouring the passage of different pathogens between
257 the domestic and wild compartments of this same species (*Sus scrofa*). Another hypothesis
258 explaining the emergence of this disease in wild boars would be a change in the bacteria's
259 pathogenic mechanism. If the bacteria was able to multiply without needing to adhere to
260 intestinal epithelial cells or using another receptor, the genetic risk factor would no longer
261 affect the emergence of edema disease in wild boars.

262 Although Asian pig breeds do not present (or present at a very low frequency) the *FUT1*
263 genotype conferring resistance to edema disease, the susceptibility of these animals to post-
264 weaning diarrhoea appears to be lower than that of western pig breeds [16]. One therefore may
265 hypothesize that one or more other genes in the gene black box modulate the susceptibility of
266 pigs to edema disease [22]. The emergence of edema disease in wild boar populations in
267 France could then be related to a hypothetical increase in the frequency of wild boar/domestic
268 pig hybrids, leading to an increased susceptibility to this disease.

269 Genetic modification in subsequent generations of wild boar is possible following the death of
270 susceptible wild boars. A future study is needed to clarify this point.

271

272 **Difference of allele frequency between wild boars and domestic** 273 **pigs**

274

275 **Frequency of the A allele and domestication of pigs**

276 Domesticated pigs have two main origins: Europe and Asia. European domestic pig
277 populations are the result of the domestication of European wild boars, while Asian pigs
278 originate from Asian wild boars [23, 24]; there is a deep phylogenetic split between European
279 and Asian wild boars [25]. Moreover, the frequencies of the resistant A allele in different
280 Asian and western pig breeds already have been compared by Yan *et al.* (2003) and Bao *et al.*
281 (2008) using samples obtained in pig farms located in China [3, 16]. These studies show that
282 the resistant A allele is much more frequent in European and American breeds than in Asian
283 breeds, a finding confirmed by other studies identified in our bibliographic synthesis. The

284 authors of these works deduce from these results that the resistant allele likely came from
285 European wild boars [3] from which western domestic pig breeds have descended [23, 26, 27].
286 According to this phylogenetic pattern and these previous results we would have expected that
287 the frequency of the resistant A allele in the wild boars sampled in France would be fairly
288 similar to the frequency of the resistant A allele in European domestic pig breeds and would
289 be substantially higher than the frequency of the resistant A allele in Asian wild boars and
290 Asian domestic pig breeds. However, our results suggest that the frequency of the resistant A
291 allele is much lower in French wild boars than in European domestic pig breeds and fairly
292 similar to that in Asian wild boars, and Asian domestic pig breeds. Several hypotheses could
293 explain this pattern.

294 The analysis of the genomes of European and Asian wild and domestic pigs by Frantz *et al.*
295 (2015), raised possible explanation related to the evolutionary and demographic history of
296 European wild boars and European domestic pigs populations. Indeed their results suggest
297 that European wild boar population experienced strong bottlenecks due to overhunting and
298 habitat loss [28]. Such demographic bottlenecks are suspected to result, through the associated
299 genetic drift, in changes in the genetic composition in wild boar populations including the loss
300 of alleles [29]. The resistant A allele could have been lost during such demographic
301 bottlenecks. Another interesting hypothesis presented by Frantz *et al.* (2015) is that some wild
302 boar population that contributed to the current genetic pool of European domestic pigs are
303 extinct [28]. The resistant A allele could originate from such extinct populations. Under these
304 hypotheses, the few wild boar individuals (7/222) with this A allele could be the products of a
305 (more or less recent) hybridization between pigs and wild boars.

306 Another scenario could be envisioned in which the frequency of the A allele would be very
307 low or even null in the wild boar populations from which European domestic pigs originate.
308 Under this hypothesis the A allele would have appeared and/or been selected in domestic pig

309 populations following domestication. It has been demonstrated in a population of Sutaï breed
310 (Asian) pigs that between 2008 and 2011 the frequency of the A allele increased. The authors
311 of this study also examined the relationship between *FUT1* gene polymorphism and growth
312 and found that pigs with the AA genotype (resistant to edema disease) had the best growth.
313 The authors of this study therefore suggest that the increased frequency of the A allele is the
314 consequence of artificial selection aimed at not only improving resistance to post-weaning
315 diarrhoea and edema disease, but also production performance [30]. Another study [31]
316 examined the association between the genotype for the *FUT1* gene and litter size. In this
317 study, animals with the AG genotype had better group performance and larger litter sizes than
318 those with the GG genotype (the number of individuals with the AA genotype was too small
319 to be analyzed [31]). Filistowicz and Jasek also studied the effect of the *FUT1* gene on fertility
320 and reproductive success rates, but by looking at the interactions between the polymorphisms
321 of the *FUT1* [32] and *MUC4* (gene associated with the receptors of bacteria responsible for
322 neonatal diarrhoea) genes [33]. They detected a positive interaction between the $MUC4^{B/B}$ and
323 $FUT1^{A/G}$ genotypes on fertility and a negative interaction between the $MUC4^{A/A}$ and $FUT1^{A/G}$
324 genotypes on fertility [32]. In these studies, the association between the *FUT1* gene, fertility,
325 and animal production performance is described but incompletely understood. By considering
326 the hypothesis of the emergence and then selection of the A allele in some domestic pig
327 populations, the few wild boar individuals (7/222) with this A allele could again involve a
328 (more or less recent) hybridization between pigs and wild boars.

329

330 **Frequency of the A allele and pig-wild boar interface in France**

331 Numerous possibly hybrid wild boars have been observed in Ardèche in the communes where
332 the samples were taken. These wild boars are suspected of being ‘hybrids’ due to their

333 phenotypic characteristics: white tips of the legs, spotted coats, thick layer of fat, drooping
334 ears, litters of over 10 piglets. In addition, chromosomal screening of French wild boars
335 conducted on breeding farms and in different natural wild boar populations has demonstrated
336 the presence of hybrids ($2n = 37$ or $2n = 38$, whereas the Western European wild boar has $2n$
337 $= 36$ chromosomes), sometimes at high frequencies [34–36]. Several complementary studies
338 could be set up to corroborate the hypothesis of the ancestral nature of the G allele and of the
339 link between domestication and the emergence of the A allele. It could then be possible to
340 genotype non-hybridized wild boars ($2n = 36$ chromosomes), in natural populations of wild
341 boars considered to be "purebred" (identified as purebred through a follow-up study of the
342 karyotype of wild boars) or in breeding farms historically free of hybrids to confirm the
343 absence of the A allele when there is no introgression with domestic pigs. It also would be
344 possible to investigate variations of allele frequencies of the *FUT1* gene along frequency
345 gradients of pig-wild boar interactions. Lastly, it would be interesting to monitor on a
346 longitudinal basis the rate of evolution of allele frequencies of the *FUT1* gene in wild boar
347 populations (following the protocol used with the Soutai breed [30]).

348

349 **Allele frequency and wild boar hunting pressure**

350

351 The evolution of hunting practices and of wild boar populations is enabling a strong renewal
352 of wild boar populations. It is possible that a selection of individuals with rapid growth, and
353 therefore with an ability to reproduce increasingly younger, is taking place. Indeed, to enable
354 wild boar populations to increase, some hunting organizations in certain French departments
355 request their hunters to avoid killing female wild boars that have surpassed the threshold
356 weight needed to reproduce. A selection of wild boars consequently is causing an

357 artificialization of wild boar populations as hunters are allowing the survival of wild boars
358 with higher growth rates. Given that domestic pigs with the A allele would have stronger
359 growth and reproduction rates [30], it is logical to hypothesize that wild boars with an AG or
360 AA genotype also have a stronger growth rate.

361 Moreover, in the French departments (located in southern France) where sampling was
362 possible, the selection of hunted wild boars is very limited, which contrasts with northern
363 France, where it is much more widespread.

364

365 **The wild boar, a potential reservoir of the bacterium?**

366

367 Wild boars, which according to our results predominately have a genotype enabling the
368 adhesion and multiplication of enterotoxigenic *E. coli* stx2e F18 strains responsible for edema
369 disease, could be potential reservoirs of the bacteria. A serological study on pig farms
370 highlighted a seroprevalence of 96.4% for *E. coli* F18 for open-air domestic pigs, and 88.8%
371 for housed domestic pig farms [37]. As the F18 virulence gene is one of the virulence genes
372 identified for the bacterium found in wild boars, an equivalent study on wild boars would be
373 useful to anticipate potential mortalities in wild boars in the event that wild boars act as a
374 reservoir of this bacteria. With increasing pig-wild boar interactions, the passage of the
375 bacteria from the wild to the domestic compartment should be considered.

376

377 **Abbreviations**

378 *E. coli* : *Escherichia coli*

379 FUT1 : alpha-1-fucosyltransferase

380 ETEC : enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli*

381 PCR : Polymerase Chain Reaction

382 GLM : Generalized Linear Model

383 ED : Edema Disease

384

385 **Declarations**

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392

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399

400 **Availability of data and materials**

401 All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article.
402 Materials (DNA), samples (tissues and spleen) are available from the corresponding author on
403 reasonable request.

404

405 **Authors' contributions**

406 GP designed and supervised the study. GP wrote the original manuscript. GP, VG, KCM, AD,
407 GPM, DD and AD revised the manuscript. DD has developed the protocol. GP performed the
408 experiments. GP, VG and KCM analysed the data. All authors have reviewed and approved
409 the final manuscript.

410

411 **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

412 Not applicable.

413

414 **Consent for publication**

415 Not applicable.

416

417 **Competing interests**

418 Authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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540

541 **Fig 1. Location of the four French departments sampled.** In blue: Ardèche, in orange:

542 Lozère, in green: Hérault, in red: Pyrénées-Orientales

543 **Fig 2. Location of the sources of samples in Ardèche**

544 **Fig 3. Location of the sources of samples in Pyrénées-Orientales**

545 **Fig 4. Location of samples in Lozère**

546 **Fig 5. Location of samples in Hérault**

547

548

549

APPENDIX

550

Breed	Origin	Sample size	AA genotype frequency	AG genotype frequency	GG genotype frequency	A allele frequency	G allele frequency	Reference
Eurasian wild boar (<i>Sus scrofa</i> L., 1758)	Asia	89	0	0	1 (89)	0	1	[19]
Large White	Europe	174	0.052 (9)	0.448 (78)	0.5 (87)	0.276	0.724	[14]
Pudong White	Asia	168	0.018 (3)	0.405 (68)	0.577 (97)	0.22	0.78	
Large White boars	Europe	48	0.021	0.354	0.625	0.2	NA	[12]
Large White sows	Europe	77	0.026	0.429	0.545	0.24	NA	
Landrace boars	Europe	19	0.211	0.789	0.263	NA	NA	
Pietrain	Europe	171	0.088	0.415	0.497	NA	NA	
Duroc	America	102	0.206	0.48	0.314	NA	NA	
Prestice Black Pied pig	Europe	55	0.836	0.164	0	NA	NA	[13]
Red Mangalitsa	Europe	40	NA	NA	NA	0.69	NA	
Bazan	Europe	62	NA	NA	NA	0.3	NA	
Duroc	America	44	0.136 (6)	0.341 (15)	0.523 (23)	0.307	0.693	[3]
Yorkshire	Europe	62	0 (0)	0.323 (20)	0.677 (42)	0.162	0.838	
Pietrain	Europe	54	0.167 (9)	0.333 (18)	0.500 (27)	0.334	0.666	
Landrace	Europe	56	0 (0)	0.179 (10)	0.821 (46)	0.09	0.91	
Erhualian	Asia	57	0 (0)	0.211 (12)	0.789 (45)	0.106	0.894	
Fengjin	Asia	46	0 (0)	0.084 (4)	0.913 (42)	0.044	0.956	
Meishan	Asia	40	0 (0)	0.025 (1)	0.975 (39)	0.013	0.987	
Huai	Asia	35	0 (0)	0.086 (3)	0.914 (32)	0.043	0.957	
Leping	Asia	35	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (35)	0	1	
Xiushuihang	Asia	36	0 (0)	0 (0)	01 (36)	0	1	
Wanan	Asia	31	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (31)	0	1	

Breed	Origin	Sample size	AA genotype frequency	AG genotype frequency	GG genotype frequency	A allele frequency	G allele frequency	Reference
Lingao	Asia	31	0 (0)	0.032 (1)	0.968 (30)	0.016	0.984	
Northeast min	Asia	52	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (52)	0	1	
Rongchang	Asia	46	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (46)	0	1	
Songliao	Asia	59	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (59)	0	1	
Wuzhistan	Asia	50	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (50)	0	1	
Tibetan	Asia	53	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (53)	0	1	
Sujiang	Asia	31	0 (0)	0.258 (8)	0.742 (23)	0.129	0.871	
Sutai	Asia	98	0 (0)	0.092 (9)	0.908 (89)	0.046	0.954	
Hybrid	Asia	41	0 (0)	0.463 (19)	0.537 (22)	0.232	0.768	
Asian wild boar	Asia	32	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (32)	0	1	
Prestice Black Pied pig	Europe	92	0.023	0.233	0.744	0.14	0.86	[15]
Large White	Europe	231	0.05 (11)	0.47 (108)	0.48 (112)	0.28	0.72	[38]
Landrace	Europe	107	0.02 (2)	0.35 (38)	0.63 (67)	0.2	0.8	
Songliao Black	Asia	109	0.02 (2)	0.20 (22)	0.78 (85)	0.12	0.88	
(Large white x Landrace) x Leicoma	Europe	120	0.025	0.292	0.683	0.17	0.83	[23]
Large White	Europe	14	0	0.71	0.28	0.36	0.64	[39]
Landrace	Europe	32	0	0.417	0.58	0.22	0.78	
Zlotnicka Spotted	Europe	8	0.37	0.5	0.12	0.63	0.37	
Zlotnicka White	Europe	12	0	0.438	0.562	0.21	0.79	
Polish Large White x ZS	Europe	18	0.33	0.5	0.17	0.58	0.42	
Duroc	America	205	NA	NA	NA	0.278	0.722	[40]
Large White	Europe	431	NA	NA	NA	0.061	0.939	
Landrace	Europe	794	NA	NA	NA	0.092	0.908	
Duroc	America	43	0.116 (5)	0.465 (20)	0.419 (18)	0.349	0.651	[18]
Landrace	Europe	262	0	0.046 (12)	0.954 (250)	0.023	0.977	
Large White	Europe	40	0.075 (3)	0.425 (17)	0.500 (20)	0.287	0.713	

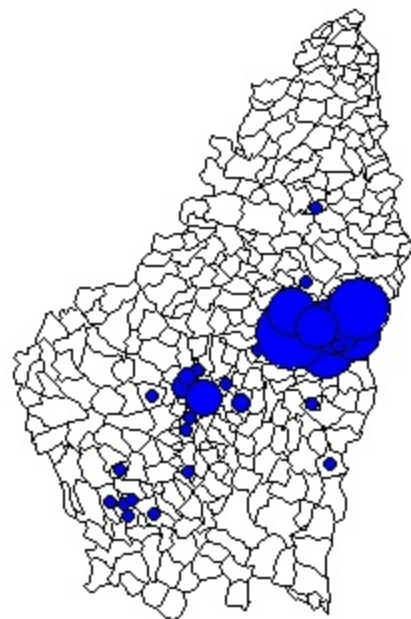
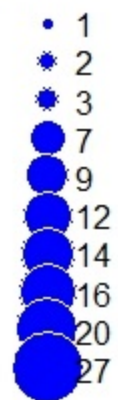
Breed	Origin	Sample size	AA genotype frequency	AG genotype frequency	GG genotype frequency	A allele frequency	G allele frequency	Reference
Duroc x Landrace x Largewhite	Europe	461	0.086 (39)	0.423 (195)	0.492 (227)	0.297	0.703	
Duroc x wild boar	Europe	33	0.03 (1)	0.394 (13)	0.576 (19)	0.227	0.773	
Largewhite x Jianli	Asia	36	0	0	1 (36)	0	1	
Qingping	Asia	33	0	0	1 (33)	0	1	
petit Meishan	Asia	43	0	0	1 (43)	0	1	
Jinhua	Asia	26	0	0	1 (26)	0	1	
Jianli	Asia	49	0	0	1 (49)	0	1	
Wild pig	Asia	15	0	0	1 (15)	0	1	
French wild boar	Europe	219	0	0.032 (7)	0.968 (212)	0.016	0.984	
Yorkshire	Europe	29	0.1	0.45	0.45	0.33	0.67	[17]
Pelon	America	46	0.11	0.5	0.39	0.36	0.64	
Cuino	America	28	0.39	0.32	0.29	0.55	0.45	
Duroc	America	56	0.036 (2)	0.232 (13)	0.732 (41)	0.152	0.848	[16]
Landrace	Europe	58	0.017 (1)	0.121 (7)	0.862 (50)	0.071	0.929	
Large White	Europe	60	0.033 (2)	0.384 (23)	0.583 (35)	0.224	0.776	
Pietrain	Europe	17	0.059 (1)	0.353 (6)	0.588 (10)	0.222	0.778	
Hampshire	Europe	59	0.017 (1)	0.204 (12)	0.779 (46)	0.113	0.887	
Min	Asia	50	0	0	1	0	1	
Mashen	Asia	39	0	0	1	0	1	
Luchuan	Asia	56	0	0	1	0	1	
Tibetan	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	
Gogbujiangsa tibetan	Asia	61	0	0	1	0	1	
Bama xiang	Asia	62	0	0	1	0	1	
Kele	Asia	51	0	0	1	0	1	
Dahe	Asia	16	0	0	1	0	1	
Wuzhishan	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	
Shanggao	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	
Dongxianx spotted	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	
Leping spotted	Asia	62	0	0	1	0	1	

Breed	Origin	Sample size	AA genotype frequency	AG genotype frequency	GG genotype frequency	A allele frequency	G allele frequency	Reference
Yushan hei	Asia	61	0	0	1	0	1	
Hang	Asia	61	0	0	1	0	1	
Erhualian	Asia	62	0	0	1	0	1	
Jinhua	Asia	62	0	0	1	0	1	
Ningxiang	Asia	61	0	0	1	0	1	
Rongchang	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	
Neijiang	Asia	62	0	0	1	0	1	
Lingao	Asia	62	0	0.258 (16)	0.742 (46)	0.129	0.871	
Guangdong	Asia	60	0	0	1	0	1	

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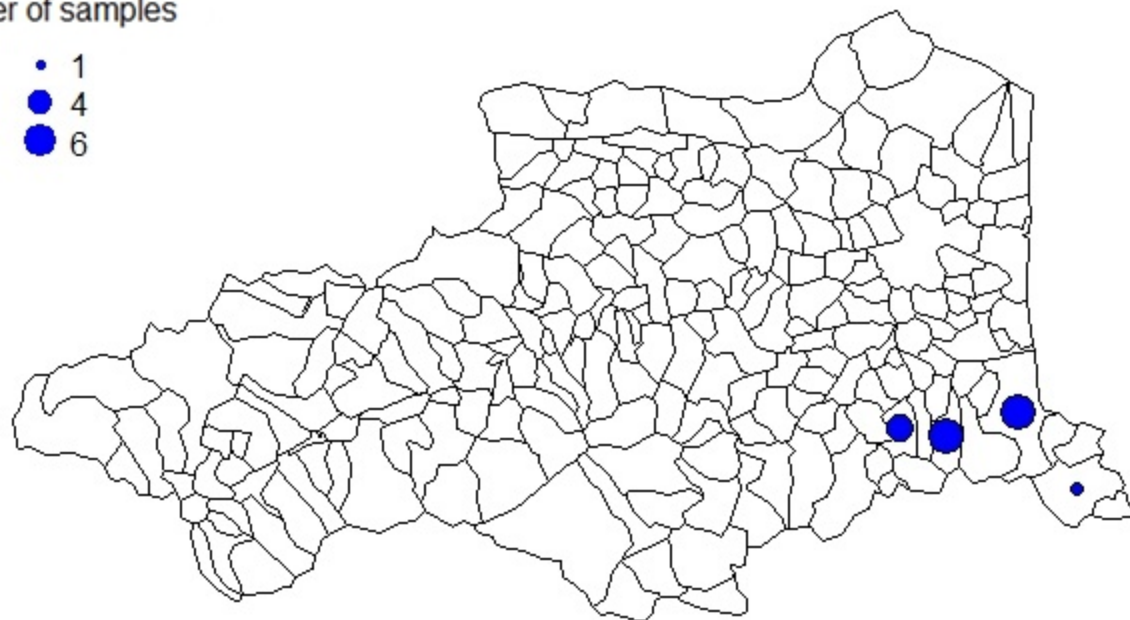


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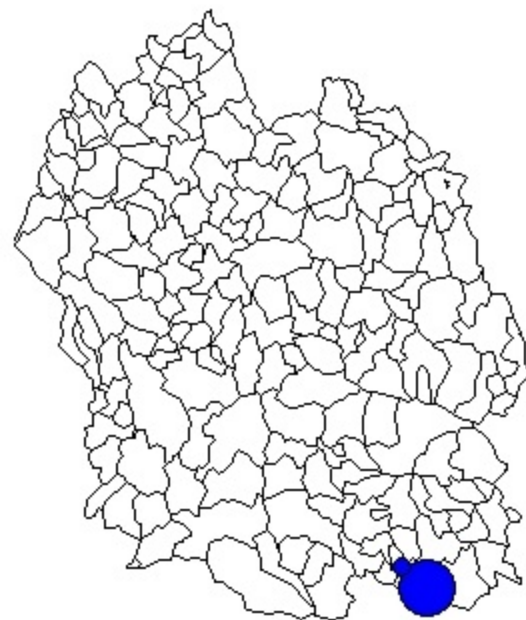


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Number of samples



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