

Killer fungus invades Europe

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n invasive pathogenic fungus (*Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*) is a threat to European salamander and newt biodiversity. Bsal was originally discovered in the Netherlands because it caused mass mortality in salamanders and drove the infected populations to local extinction. Subsequent laboratory trials showed most European salamander and newt species die quickly after infection.

Using data from field surveillance, a new study showed that the killer fungus now occurs in many new places in the Netherlands and Belgium. In addition, it was found for the first time in the wild in Germany. The study also shows that the fungus infects additional species in the wild. The fungus was detected at 14 of the 55 sampled sites. The infected amphibians were fire salamanders, alpine newts, and smooth newts.

"Our results demonstrate that the range of Bsal distribution may be up to about 10,000 km² across Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands" says Annemarieke Spitzen-van der Sluijs who led the study. She adds "Our study provides evidence that Bsal among wild amphibians in Europe is more widely distributed and affects a wider host range than previously known, which can either indicate recent spread of the fungus or point to historically infected sites that hitherto remained undetected. The presence of Bsal in wild populations can easily remain unnoticed because the lesions develop only near the final stage of the disease."

The international research team says that further surveillance of the [chytrid fungus](#) is very important. Spitzen-van der Sluijs asks for help from the public. "Please report sick or dead salamanders and newts so

we can further fill the map of the distribution of the [fungus](#) in Europe."

More information: Annemarieke Spitzen-van der Sluijs et al.
Expanding Distribution of Lethal Amphibian Fungus in Europe ,
Emerging Infectious Diseases (2016). [DOI: 10.3201/eid2207.160109](https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2207.160109)

Provided by Ghent University

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