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Predicting spatial prevalence of tick pathogens in Northern Europe using satellite imagery

Ana Carolina Cuellar [1], Kirstine Klitgaard Schou[1], Sara Moutailler[2], Patrick Fach[2], Sabine Delannoy[2], Fimme van der Wal[3], Aline de Koeier[3], Jan Chirico[4], Anna Aspán[4], Mikael Juremalm[4], Karen Mansfield[5], Paul Phipps[5],Tony Fooks[5] and Rene Bødker[1]

[1] National Veterinary Institute- Technical University of Denmark, Section of Epidemiology, [2] French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety- France, [3]Central Veterinarian Institute- Wageningen University- Netherlands [4]National Veterinary Institute- Sweden, [5]Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) - United Kingdom
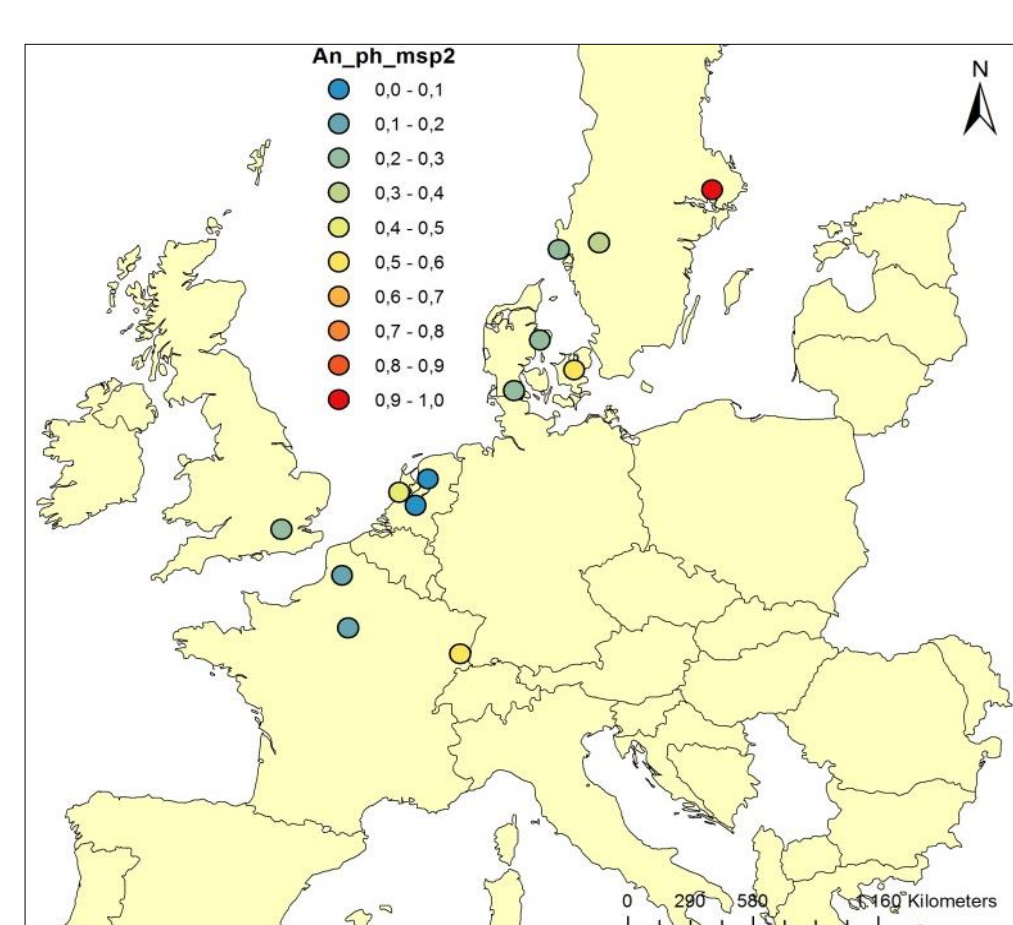
Background

- Spatial distribution of ticks and the pathogens they transmit is a key tool to assess human risk for tick borne diseases

- Tick pathogens are related to the presence of suitable hosts which depend on environmental factors

- We hypothesis therefore that the spatial prevalence can be modelled using predictors variables obtained from Earth Observation satellites (Big Data).
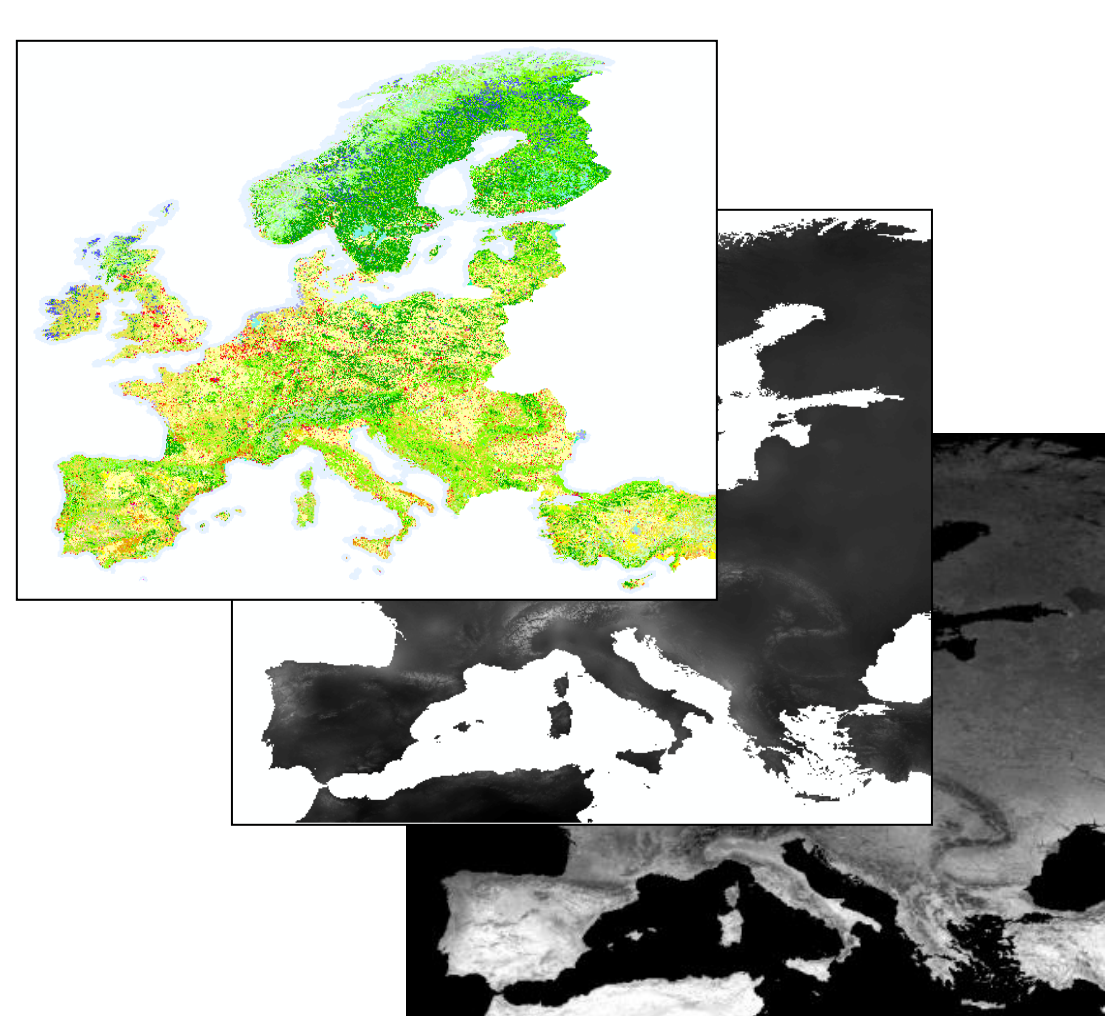
Objectives

- To model the probability of presence of different ticks pathogens in five European countries using environmental variables extracted from satellite imagery

- To map the probability of presence of ticks pathogens

- To analyze if the probability of presence its correlated to the ticks pathogen prevalence
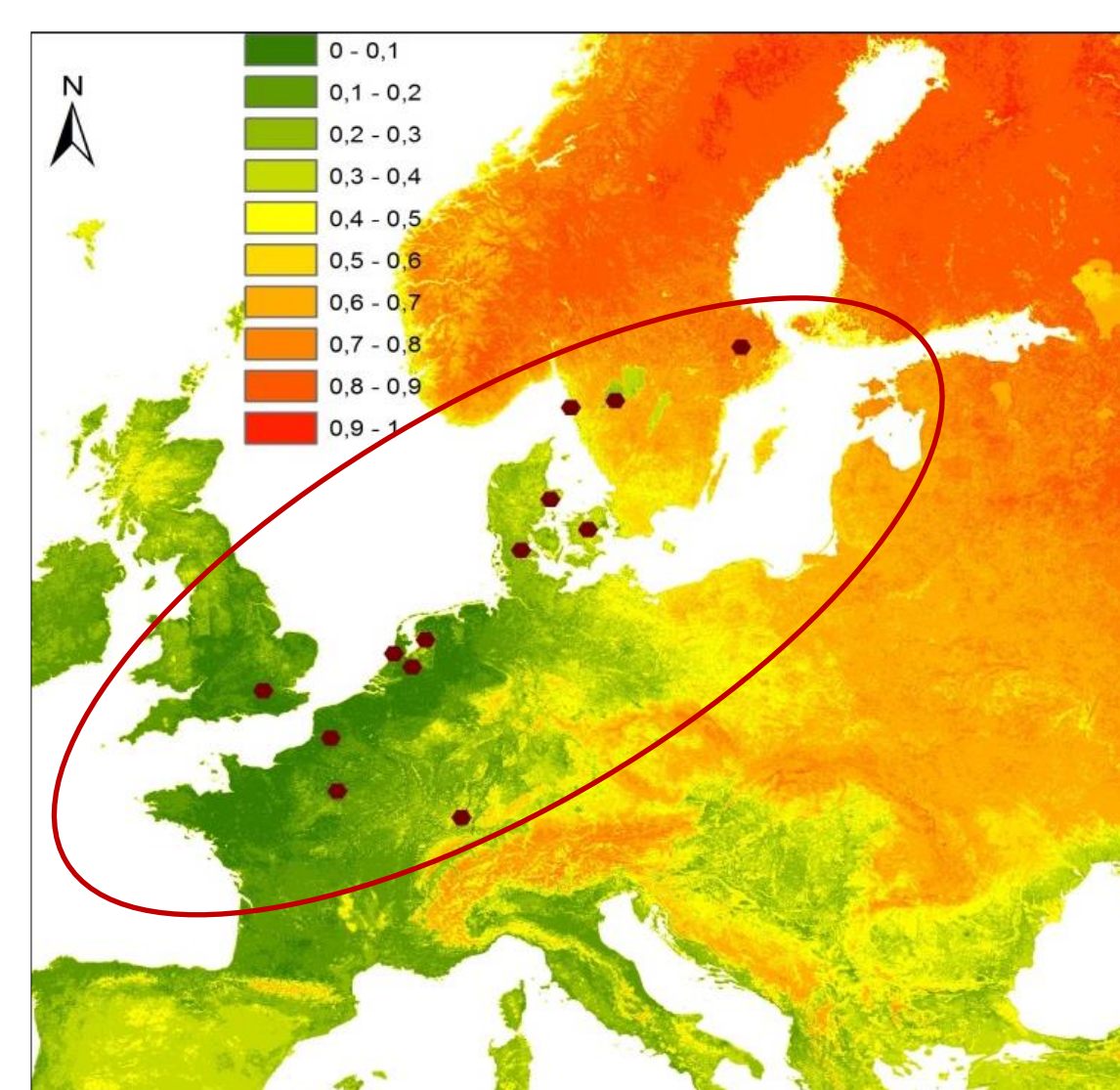
Methods

Data collection: pools of 25 *Ixodes ricinus* nymphs from 13 sites (England, France, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden)

Observed prevalence of tick pathogens

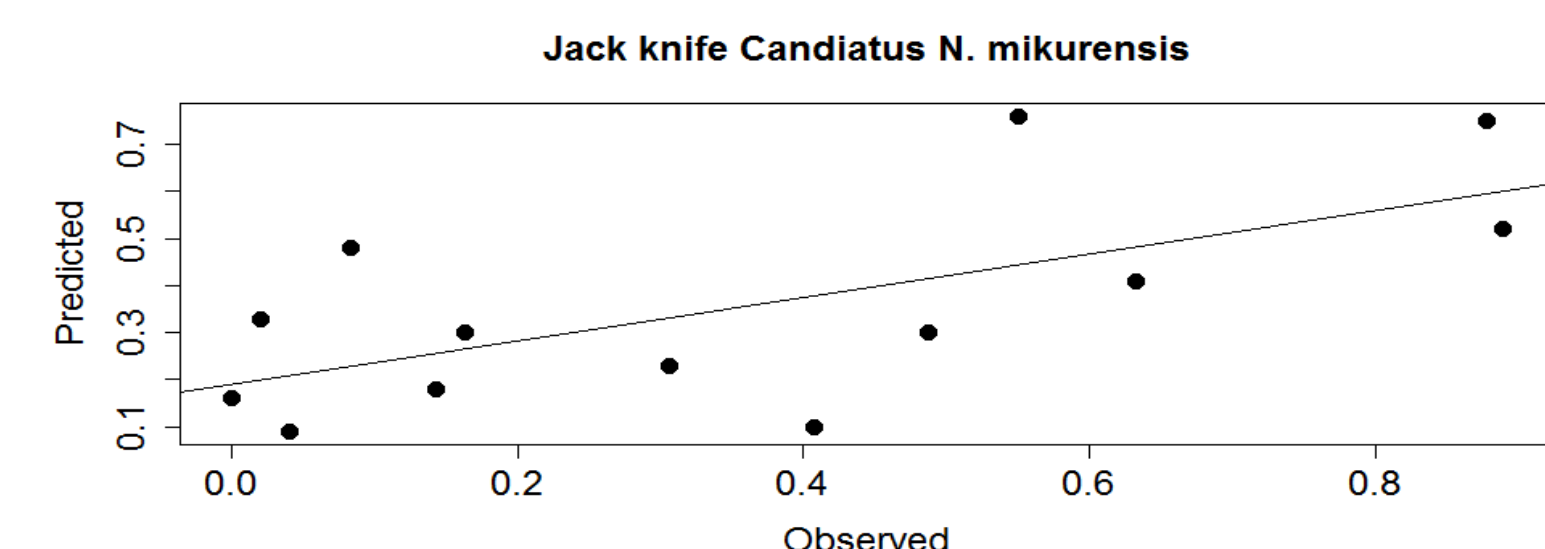Machine Learning modelling Random Forest
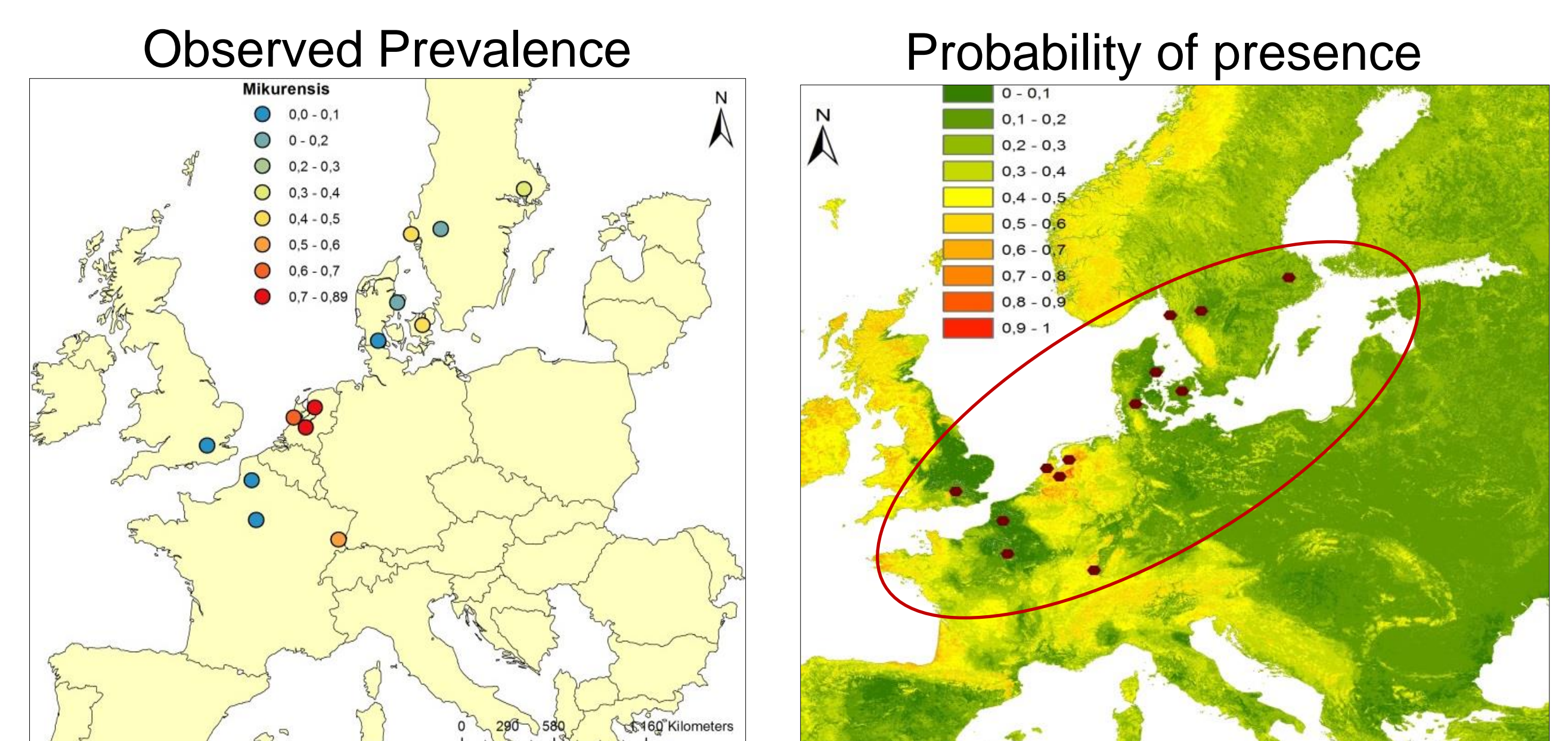
Probability of presence map

Environmental predictors from satellite imagery

Model validation: Jackknife

Results

The model was significant for 2/7 of the species,

Candidatus *Neoehrlichia mikerensis*

Observed Prevalence

Probability of presence

Jack knife Candiatus N. mikurensis

P=0,01523

Borrelia garinii

Observed Prevalence

Probability of presence

Jack knife Borrelia garinii
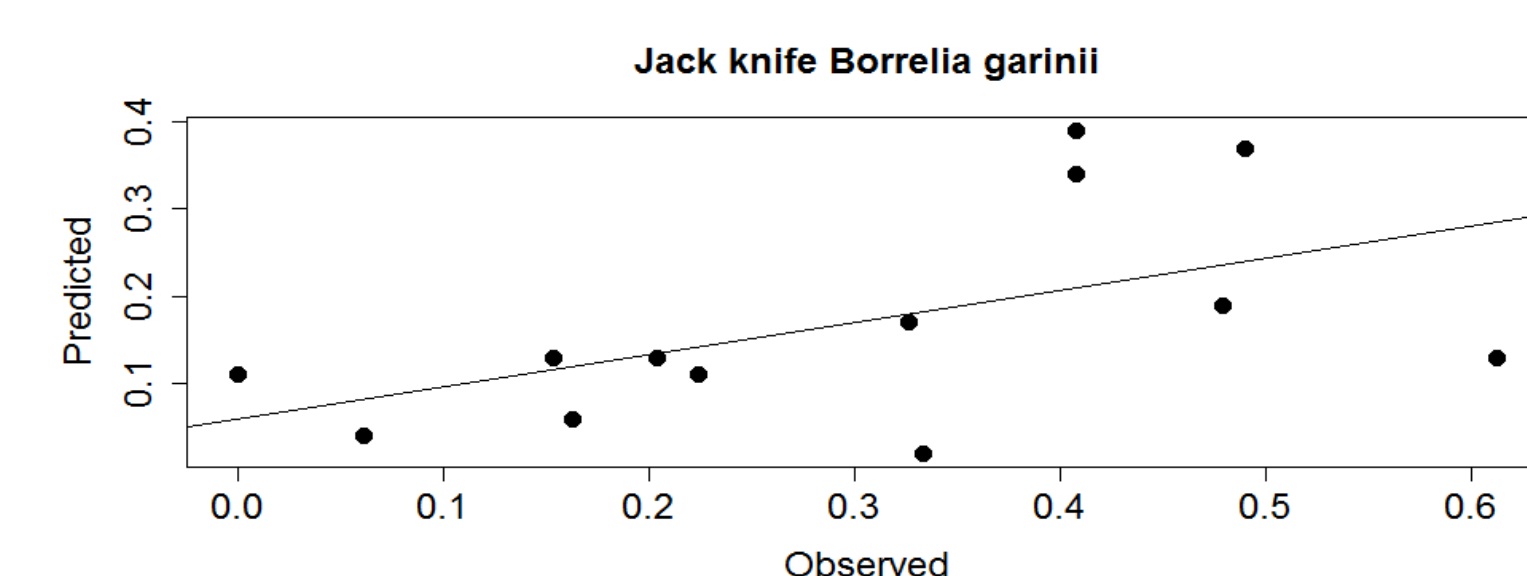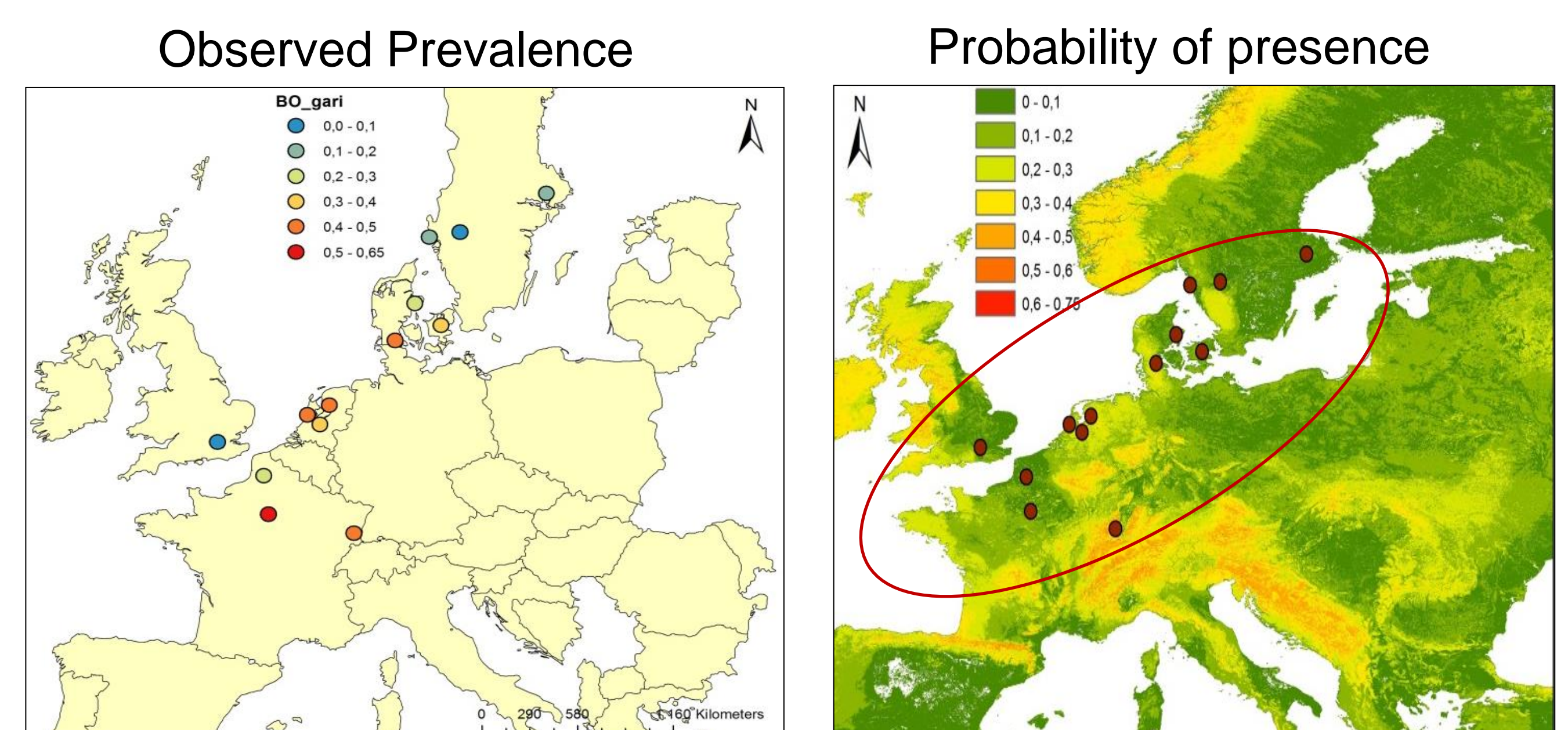
P=0,05589

Conclusion

- Pathogen prevalence differed between sites

- Observed prevalences fit the environmental data

- It is possible to predict and model spatial variation in prevalence of some tick-borne pathogens

DTU VET
National Veterinary Institute
Section for Epidemiology
Technical University of Denmark

Bülowsvej 27
1870 Frederiksberg C

Corresponding author:

Ana Carolina Cuellar
PhD student

Phone: +45 71 61 98 22
Email: anacu@vet.dtu.dk

Technical University of Denmark