

African Swine Fever

African swine fever is a contagious viral disease of domestic and wild pigs, with the potential to spread rapidly through pig populations and cause significant mortalities.

WHAT IS AFRICAN SWINE FEVER?

African swine fever (ASF) is a contagious exotic disease of domestic and wild pigs caused by a viral infection. Different isolates of the virus can cause a range of clinical signs that vary in severity. Severe forms of the disease can lead to the death of up to 100% of a herd.

There have been no occurrences of ASF in Australia. The disease is present in sub-Saharan Africa and has more recently been detected in other countries in Europe and across Asia.

If introduced into Australia, the disease would have a significant impact on pig health and production, and contribute to wider economic impacts including those caused by a loss of access to overseas markets for pork products.

There is no vaccination and no treatment currently available for ASF. Implementation of an effective biosecurity plan is the best available tool for the prevention and control of ASF.

ASF virus does not infect people.

WHAT SPECIES ARE AFFECTED?

Domestic and wild (feral) pigs are susceptible to ASF. Other suid species such as the collared peccary, the white-lipped peccary, the African warthog and the African bush pig are susceptible, but these are not present in Australia outside of zoos and other specialist animal establishments.

HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?

ASF virus may be spread by contact with infected pigs and pig products, or through contact with contaminated vehicles, equipment, feed or clothing.

In Africa, soft-bodied ticks are linked with the spread of ASF virus. Similar ticks can be found in Australia associated with some wildlife but they are not known to feed on pigs. Other blood-sucking insects, such as mosquitoes and biting flies, are able to transmit the virus mechanically for 24 to 48 hours.

Several international outbreaks of ASF have been associated with the feeding of infected meat or other pig products to pigs (a process known as 'swill feeding').

Swill feeding is prohibited throughout Australia due to its potential to introduce diseases like ASF.

It is illegal to feed waste food to pigs containing meat, meat products and any food that was served on the same plate or that has come into contact with meat, as well as imported dairy products.

The ASF virus can survive for long periods of time under most environmental conditions. The virus can survive extended periods in raw, processed and frozen meat and meat products and is resistant to several commercially available disinfectants. Pigs that have recovered from ASF can carry the virus long-term.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS?

The severity of disease associated with ASF varies depending upon the virus isolate. It is clinically indistinguishable from classical swine fever (hog cholera), another significant viral disease exotic to Australia.

In severe, acute outbreaks, infected animals may present with signs of high fever, loss of appetite, lethargy, weakness and/or 'reddening' of the skin, rapidly leading to death. Mortality rates are usually very high.

Other signs may include blue-coloured blotching of the skin of the ears, tail, lower legs or thigh, apparent abdominal pain, constipation or diarrhoea, breathing difficulties, vomiting, abortions in sows and/or neurological signs such as convulsions.

The course of the disease is usually 1 to 7 days. The chronic form of ASF generally has lower mortality (although young animals may suffer high mortalities) and signs may include recurrent, transient fever, ill thrift, stunting, emaciation, pneumonia, arthritis and/or skin ulcers. The chronic form usually lasts up to 3 to 4 weeks and is generally seen in pigs surviving more acute forms of ASF. Pigs may become chronic carriers of the virus without showing clinical signs.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT ASF

ASF is a notifiable exotic disease and any suspected or confirmed cases must be reported *immediately* to Agriculture Victoria on the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline 1800 675 888 or to your local Agriculture Victoria Animal Health and Welfare staff.

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE?

Agriculture Victoria is implementing a range of measures to communicate the risks of ASF and swill feeding, and work with stakeholders on improving preparedness for an ASF outbreak.

The government's response to an outbreak of ASF will aim to quickly eradicate the disease through a combination of strategies including, quarantine and movement controls to prevent the spread of disease, destruction and disposal of infected animals, decontamination of infected premises and tracing and surveillance to determine the extent of the infection.

WHAT CAN PIG OWNERS DO?

You must ensure that you are registered on the Agriculture Victoria Property Identification Code (PIC) database as having pigs and if you are trading pigs off your property you should have registered a pig tattoo. You can update your PIC details online at www.pic.agriculture.vic.gov.au or by telephoning Agriculture Victoria on 1800 678 779 during business hours.

You should apply strict biosecurity measures including: cleaning and disinfection as required of farm buildings, transport vehicles and equipment; managing risks associated

with introduced animals; control access to pigs, maintain records of movements of animals, people and vehicles onto and off the farm, and notify your veterinary practitioner or Agriculture Victoria if you suspect an emergency animal disease.

Consider the risk of overseas visitors and workers returning from overseas inadvertently bringing disease onto your property.

Ensure that pigs are not fed waste food containing meat, meat products and any food that was served on the same plate or that has come into contact with meat, as well as imported dairy products. This is known as 'swill feeding' and is illegal in Australia. Swill feeding is believed to have contributed to the spread of ASF across the world.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-and-weeds/animal-diseases/pigs/african-swine-fever>

Images: Pigs with ASF showing marked skin redness particularly of the extremities such as ears, lower legs and underbelly.



Source: <http://www.afrivip.org/sites/default/files/ASF/diagnosis.html>

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