African Swine Fever

*African swine fever is a highly contagious viral disease of 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 highly contagious exotic disease of 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.

The disease has been constantly present in sub-Saharan Africa since first identified in 1921, with outbreaks in Europe and Latin America in the late 20th century. A new virulent strain emerged in Europe in 2007 that has since spread widely in Europe, into Asia in 2018 and to the Caribbean in 2021. The nearest cases of disease have been reported in Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste.

ASF is a World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)-listed disease, cases are immediately notifiable to government. There have been no occurrences of ASF in Australia.

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

There are no effective treatments or vaccines available for use against the ASF virus. Implementation of an effective biosecurity plan is the best available tool for the prevention and control of AFS.

***There is no evidence that the ASF virus infects people.***

**HOW IS THE VIRUS SPREAD?**

ASF virus may be spread by close contact with infected pigs and pig products , or 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 but they are not known to feed on pigs. The main route of ASF virus spread requires pig to pig contact or pig contact with trucks/pens contaminated with faeces blood etc from infected pigs. Aerosol spread is limited to close on-farm contacts only.

Outbreaks have been associated with feeding infected meat or other pig products to pigs. Swill feeding is prohibited in Australia because of its potential to introduce diseases such as 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 some imported dairy products.

The ASF virus can survive for long periods under most environmental conditions. The virus is able to 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 SPECIES ARE AFFECTED?**

Domestic and feral pigs are the only susceptible species in Australia outside zoos.

Other 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.

**WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS IN ANIMALS?**

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:

* red-blue coloured blotching of the skin of the ears, tail, lower legs or thigh,
* apparent abdominal pain,
* constipation or bloody 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. A chronic form of ASF with lower mortality and signs including transient fever, ill thrift, stunting, pneumonia, arthritis and/or skin ulcers has been seen where the disease is endemic, but has not generally been a feature of the recent outbreaks. Pigs may become chronic carriers of the virus without showing any clinical signs.

**WHAT TO DO IF I 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 TO ASF?**

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

tracing and surveillance to determine the extent of the infection.

**WHAT PIG OWNERS CAN DO TO PREVENT AN OUTBREAK**

Develop a Biosecurity Management Plan for your enterprise and maintain the key biosecurity processes that will protect your pigs. These include: restricting access of pigs, other animals and people including vehicles to areas you hold pigs, cleaning and disinfection of farm buildings, transport vehicles and equipment; managing risks associated with introduced animals; 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.

You should consider the risks from overseas visitors and workers returning from overseas.

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.



**Images**: Pigs with African swine fever showing marked skin redness particularly of the extremities such as ears, lower legs and underbelly. Images from the [African Veterinary Information Portal](https://afrivip.org/).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit the Agriculture Victoria [ASF Page](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/pests-diseases-%20and-weeds/animal-diseases/pigs/african-swine-fever)

