

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.

There have been no occurrences of ASF in Australia.

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. It 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.

If introduced into Australia, the disease would have a devastating impact on pig health and production. Wider economic impacts would be experienced, caused by a loss of jobs and 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 ASF.

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 pens, vehicles, equipment, feed, boots or clothing, contaminated with faeces, blood or other bodily fluids. Aerosol spread is limited to close on-farm contacts only.

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. Spread by flies is possible over short distances.

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 food to pigs containing meat or meat products. This includes 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 identical to classical swine fever (hog cholera), another significant viral disease exotic to Australia.

Worldwide, most outbreaks have seen acute disease with high mortalities. Chronic forms with low mortalities have been recently emerged in China associated with failed vaccine programs. There, signs included; transient fever, lameness, ill thrift, stunting, pneumonia, arthritis and/or skin ulcers.

Pigs may become chronic carriers of the virus without showing any clinical signs.

Clinical signs of ASF may include:

- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Weakness
- Reddening of the skin
- Rapid death
- Red-blue coloured blotching of the skin on the ears, tail, lower leg or thigh
- Abdominal pain
- Constipation or bloody diarrhoea
- Breathing difficulties
- Vomiting
- Abortions in sows
- Neurological signs such as convulsions

Images: Pigs with African swine fever 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>)



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
- tracing and surveillance to determine the extent of the infection.
- decontamination of infected premises

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:

- define clean and dirty areas on your farm and restrict access of pigs, other animals, people and vehicles
- cleaning and disinfection of transport vehicles and any equipment that comes on farm
- managing risks associated with introduced animals
- maintain records of movements of animals, people and vehicles onto and off the farm
- notify your veterinary practitioner or Agriculture Victoria if you suspect an emergency animal disease or call the Hotline on 1800 675 888.
- Ensure that pigs have no access to any 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

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit: <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/pig-diseases/african-swine-fever>

ACCESSIBILITY

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or email customer.service@ecodev.vic.gov.au

This document is available in PDF and/or Word format at www.agriculture.vic.gov.au
