African swine fever

African swine fever (ASF) is an often-fatal disease in pigs and wild boar caused by a highly contagious virus. The clinical signs of ASF are similar to classical swine fever (CSF), however it is caused by a different virus. Both diseases only affect pigs and are exotic to Australia. People are not affected by African swine fever or classical swine fever.

Early recognition and reporting of African swine fever is crucial to contain the spread of the disease and to reduce the financial and social impacts of an outbreak.

How could ASF enter Australia?

ASF could enter Australia through:

- illegally imported pork meat and pork products (e.g. hams, casings) fed to pigs
- illegally imported animals, animal by-products (hides, skins) or genetic material
- people returning from overseas who have been in contact with pigs or pig areas, and who may carry the virus on clothing, footwear or equipment.

There is no vaccine or effective treatment for African swine fever.

What are the signs of ASF?

The signs vary depending on the strain of the virus. Highly virulent strains can cause death rates of up to 100%. Less virulent strains may cause minimal deaths and only non-specific signs.

Signs may include:

- increased death rate
- high fever, loss of appetite, lethargy
- reddening of skin (ears, abdomen, legs)
- blueness of extremities (ears, snout)
- coughing and difficulty breathing
- constipation, bloody diarrhoea

- vomiting
- abortions
- neurological signs (e.g. convulsions).

How does ASF spread?

ASF virus is highly contagious and resistant to many physical and environmental factors. It can survive in the environment and in infected meat products for months or longer under favourable conditions.

The virus can spread by:

- direct contact with an infected animal
- consumption of contaminated pig products (swill)
- feeding infected stock feed to pigs
- direct contact with contaminated premises
- contaminated fomites (equipment, clothing, shoes, vehicles, bedding)
- contaminated urine, faeces and effluent
- vectors such as ticks (in Africa, soft-bodied ticks spread ASF; while similar ticks are present in Australia, they are not known to feed on pigs).
- limited aerosol spread (close, on-farm contact only).

Animals usually show signs 4-19 days after infection. Infected animals can shed the virus up to 2 days before showing signs.

How can I help prevent ASF?

To reduce the risk of an outbreak of ASF:

- Don’t feed meat or food containing meat to pigs – this is illegal and can introduce serious diseases including ASF.
- Only feed pigs commercial feed, grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Stop feral pigs from accessing domestic pigs, facilities, food waste (e.g. farm dumps).
- Implement a best-practice biosecurity plan.
- Know the signs of ASF.
- Report any suspected signs to a veterinarian.

Report

If you see signs of ASF, multiple sick or dead pigs, including feral pigs, call a vet or the Emergency Animal Disease hotline on **1800 675 888**.

More information

Visit our pig feed webpage: dpird.wa.gov.au/pigfeed

Acknowledgement: Image courtesy of The Pirbright Institute.

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