

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER



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Department of Agriculture,
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Information for Farmers

Introduction

African swine fever (ASF) is an important and serious disease of domestic pigs. It is caused by the African swine fever virus. When the disease first presents in a new area or a new country, it usually presents in an acute form meaning that the effects of the disease are severe and sudden in onset. Over time, as the disease becomes established in an area, sub-acute and chronic forms of the disease where disease is persistent or lasts a long time in the animal can occur.

The acute form causes severe disease from which the majority of pigs die. There is no vaccine available for ASF. Animals other than pigs and humans are not affected by ASF.

Geographical distribution

ASF has never been confirmed in Ireland. The disease was first discovered in Kenya in 1921. ASF is present in certain regions of sub-Saharan Africa where it is regularly found to in wild bush pigs and warthogs without causing signs of disease. The disease was confirmed in Georgia in 2007 and first entered the European Union in 2014. ASF is currently present in >50 countries worldwide. China first confirmed the presence of ASF in 2018. ASF has had particularly devastating economic and food security impacts on the Asian continent where over 60% of the global pig population is kept.

Species affected

ASF affects members of the *suidae* family i.e. domestic pigs, European wild boar, warthogs and wild pigs. All age groups are equally susceptible.

Clinical signs

Clinical signs can appear anywhere from 3-15 days (most typically 4-7 days) after becoming infected with the virus. Clinical signs of ASF can be very similar to other diseases such as Classical swine fever (CSF) and porcine dermatitis and nephropathy syndrome (PDNS). For this reason, any suspicion of ASF needs to be confirmed by laboratory testing.

Signs of African swine fever

- Sudden death
- High fever (40.5-42°C)
- Reddening of the skin -tips of ears, tail, extremities, underside of chest and belly
- Reduced appetite, reduced movement, huddling together
- Vomiting, diarrhoea (can be bloody)
- Abortion in pregnant sows
- Death rates can approach 100% in domestic swine

Spread of infection

The virus can be found in all body fluids and tissues of infected pigs. Spread of disease occurs through:

- Direct contact with infected pigs, faeces and body fluids (including semen)
- Indirect contact via objects such as equipment, vehicles, dirty boots or contaminated clothing of people who have been in contact with infected pigs
- Pigs eating infected meat or meat products
- Biological vectors- ASF can be spread by a type of soft tick (*Ornithodoros spp*) However, these ticks are not present in Ireland

Control measures where ASF is confirmed

In the event that ASF is confirmed, European Union legislation requires that all infected and exposed pigs on infected premises are killed, carcasses must be appropriately disposed of, premises are cleaned and disinfected, surveillance and tracing of potentially infected or exposed pigs are carried out. ASF can be successfully eradicated if the disease is detected early and appropriate controls are rapidly introduced, as has been demonstrated by Belgium and the Czech Republic.

Prevention

Good biosecurity is essential to the prevention of introduction of ASF into Ireland. In areas where disease is already present, good biosecurity will help prevent spread of disease.

How can I improve Biosecurity?

- Only allow pigs and semen with a proven high health status onto your premises
- Allow only essential visitors onto your farm. Insist that they wear clean or disposable clothing and footwear, and wash their hands (or shower in, if possible)
- Insist that staff and visitors have a 72 hour pig-free period before entering your farm if they have had contact with other pigs or wild boar (in addition to the measures above)
- Vehicles and equipment coming onto the farm should be cleaned and disinfected beforehand
- Never allow food waste, including from households (swill) to be fed to pigs

THE FEEDING OF FOOD WASTE, WHETHER RAW OR COOKED, IS ILLEGAL IN IRELAND
ONLY FRUIT AND VEGETABLES WHICH HAVE NEVER BEEN IN A KITCHEN CAN BE FED TO PIGS

What should I do if I suspect ASF on my farm?

ASF is a **notifiable** disease. If you suspect the disease you must report it **immediately**. Contact should be made, without delay, to your **Regional Veterinary Office (RVO)** or the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine HQ on **(01) 607 2000**. Contact details of RVOs can be found at www.gov.ie/agriculture/contact. Outside office hours, call the National Disease Emergency Hotline on **01 492 8026**.

Do not move any pigs, carcasses or anything else (e.g. farm vehicles, equipment, feed or waste) until a Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine veterinary inspector has carried out an examination of the pigs. Laboratory testing is essential to confirm the presence of ASF, as it can look like other diseases of pigs. Always seek advice from your veterinary practitioner if you have any concerns about the health of your pig herd.



Pictures courtesy of the European Union Reference Laboratory for African swine fever
Centro de Investigacion en Sanidad Animal (INIA-CISA) Spain

Find more information on African swine fever at: www.gov.ie/asf