African swine fever and feral pigs

Members of the wildlife community should be alert to signs of disease in Australian feral pigs.

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious viral disease of feral (wild) and domestic pigs. It has established itself in Asia and parts of Europe and continues to spread. ASF has no vaccine and kills about 80 per cent of the pigs it infects. Due to its high economic impact and lack of a commercially available vaccine, ASF is considered one of the most important diseases of pigs worldwide and is listed as a disease of international significance by the OIE World Organisation for Animal Health.

ASF has never occurred in Australia. However, it has been reported in other areas of the world and most recently in Timor Leste. Its changing distribution means that it is a significant biosecurity threat to Australia. An outbreak would have significant impacts on pig production and health. It would also damage Australia’s trade and the economy.

Signs that are seen in infected pigs can be variable but include red, blotchy or black skin lesions; nose and eye discharge; coughing or difficulty breathing; incoordination; convulsions; abortions. Sudden death can also occur with no prior signs of disease.

We are requesting that all members of the wildlife community be alert (not alarmed) and if you see signs of disease in feral pigs (or domestic pigs) phone the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 immediately. This will put you in touch with your state or territory animal health authority. Suspect cases of ASF must be reported to animal health authorities.

ASF spreads easily by direct contact between pigs or indirectly by contaminated items including feed, feed ingredients, equipment, vehicles, clothing and footwear. It can also be spread through meat from infected animals, and vectors (such as some ticks). If you locate a sick, dead or suspect animal call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline immediately and they will advise on appropriate hygiene protocols.

Find out more about Keeping African swine fever out of Australia on the Australian Department of Agriculture website, including what signs to look out for in pigs, biosecurity requirements for incoming passengers and for people who are purchasing goods online from overseas as well as a summary of action by biosecurity authorities. You can also visit your relevant State or Territory Department of Agriculture websites for information.

References and links to key information

Australian resources:

- Find out more about Keeping African swine fever and foot-and-mouth disease out of Australia on the Australian Department of Agriculture website, including what signs to look out for in pigs, biosecurity
requirements for incoming passengers and for people who are purchasing goods online from overseas as well as a summary of action by biosecurity authorities.

- You can also visit your relevant State or Territory Department of Agriculture websites for information (ACT, NSW, NT, Qld, SA, Tas, Vic and WA), including Recognizing exotic diseases of pigs (PIRSA), African swine fever guide for veterinarians (Qld), and Biosecurity guidelines for pig producers (NSW).

- **A field guide for Australian veterinarians** – This field guide provides information on important emergency animal diseases that do not exist in Australia or that are rare. Early identification and reporting is critical to minimise the devastating impact that these diseases. This guide will help vets identify emergency animal diseases in the field, ensure they consider priority diseases when conducting diagnosis and take appropriate action when they suspect signs of a biosecurity threat. The 270 page resource is available on the Outbreak website at outbreak.gov.au/for-vets-and-scientists/emergency-animal-diseases-guide

- Australia’s **Disease Strategy for the control and eradication of African swine fever** is available as part of the AUSVETPLAN series. Wildlife considerations as part of response are addressed in the WARS AUSVETPLAN. Both can be found at: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/our-publications/ausvetplan-manuals-and-documents/.

- Additional information for producers and farmers is also available on the Animal Health Australia website, which includes a Fact Sheet - Responding to African swine fever. Further information can be found on the Australian Pork Industry Focus webpage.

- Information available on distribution and abundance of feral pigs in Australia can be accessed through “Distribution and abundance of significant invasive vertebrate pests” (West 2008), on the PestSmart website and via Feral Pig Scan.

**International resources:**

- **World Organisation for Animal health (OIE)** webpage on ASF lists the key facts about the disease, clinical signs to watch out for, and contains reports about the global situation.

- The OIE Sub-Regional Representation for South East Asia has been developing a series of ASF related webinars. These webinars aim at providing scientific information, shared experience, tips, options to countries of the sub-region.

- The OIE has also collated repository of ASF information and outreach materials developed by numerous countries.


- OIE and NZ poster on biosecurity for hunters and trampers.

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