

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO ALERT ON AFRICAN SWINE FEVER – HIGH RISK OF SPREAD DUE TO LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS SEASON

alert •

24 December 2024

Key facts:

- African swine fever (ASF) is a fatal viral disease of domestic and wild pigs of all ages. While it poses no risk to human health, ASF has severe impacts on food security, livelihoods and global markets. Currently, there is no effective vaccine or treatment available.
- Clinical signs: Although suggestive and important for detection, clinical signs are not specific to ASF. Usually, the first signs include a lack of appetite, hind limb weakness, ataxia, or sudden death. In the acute infection stage, large amounts of the virus are shed 24-48 hours before clinical signs appear. The incubation period varies between 4 and 15 days.
- 3. Differential diagnoses: Numerous differential diagnoses for ASF exist, with similar clinical signs and pathological lesions. These include classical swine fever (CSF), porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) and porcine dermatitis nephropathy syndrome (PDNS), erysipelas, salmonellosis and pasteurellosis.
- 4. Laboratory diagnosis: Recommended tissues for diagnostic tests include the tonsil, lymph nodes, kidneys and lungs. In older carcasses, the marrow of long bones is preferred, as it can retain the virus for an extended period.

FAO calls for increased vigilance and preparedness for African swine fever (ASF) during the Lunar New Year holiday season. ASF outbreaks continue to be reported in Asia and the Pacific, as well as globally. Since 2018, ASF has spread to most Asian countries. The disease affects domestic and wild pigs and, although not a threat to human health, has devastating impacts on food security, livelihoods and economies in affected countries.

Over the past year, several countries in Asia and the Pacific have notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of new ASF outbreaks [WAHIS]. These include Bangladesh, Bhutan, China (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand.

In the Philippines, the Bureau of Animal Industry has continued to release updates on ASF outbreaks [BAI, 2024]. In Indonesia, the government confirmed additional ASF cases in 11 provinces [iSIKHNAS, 2024]. Local governments in India and Viet Nam recently announced ASF outbreaks [FAO, 2024a]. In addition, Sri Lanka confirmed its first-ever ASF case through an Extraordinary Gazette dated 25 October 2024 and notified WOAH.

Human activities play a significant role in the global spread of ASF. The virus can remain infectious in raw sausage, ham and processed meat products for up to several months. Raw pork and swill feeding are major sources and modes of virus introduction. The risk of ASF virus being introduced into countries free from the disease has increased due to intensified global movement and trade of livestock and animal products. Illegal or uncontrolled imports of pig products, either accidentally through tourists, migrant workers, students, or hunters returning from endemic countries, or intentionally through smuggled pork products for personal or commercial use, pose a continuous threat. Heightened attention to these introduction routes is critically important, particularly with the increased movement of people, pork products and potentially animals before, during and after the Lunar New Year 2025 celebrations.

Useful Links

- African swine fever (ASF) situation update in Asia & Pacific <u>https://www.fao.org/animal-health/</u> situation-updates/asf-in-asia-pacific/en
- African swine fever detection and diagnosis. A manual for veterinarians (FAO Manual 2017) https://openknowledge.fao.org/ handle/20.500.14283/i7228en
- African swine fever field manual- Steps in swine handling and sample collection for African swine fever outbreak investigation (FAO 2023) https://doi.org/10.4060/cc6300en
- African swine fever in wild boar Ecology and biosecurity (EC, FAO and WOAH 2022) https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0785en
- Addressing African Swine Fever: Laboratory protocols and algorithms" in collaboration with ACDP (FAO 2020) <u>https://openknowledge.fao.org/</u> handle/20.500.14283/cb1430en
- African swine fever prevention, detection and control in resource-limited settings (FAO Guidelines 2023) https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7491en
- Joint ASF communication campaign (WOAH and FAO 2020) <u>https://trello.com/b/GloiZoik/</u> <u>africanswine-fever-woah-fao</u>
- FAO. 2024. Global consultation on African swine fever – Rome, Italy 12–14 December 2023. FAO Animal Production and Health Reports, No. 23. Rome https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1398en

Figure 1. Global ASF confirmed events in wild and domestic pigs from 1 January 2020 to 20 November 2024



Source: UN Geospatial. 2020. Map of the World. United Nations. Cited November 2024. <u>www.un.org/geospatial/file/3420/download?token=TUP4DmF</u>. Modified with GLW 4 data and Emergency Prevention System Global Animal Disease Information System (EMPRES-i+), WOAH and National Authorities data, 2024. *Disclaimer:* The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

INCREASED AFRICAN SWINE FEVER RISK

The risk of introduction and spread of ASF into countries free from the disease is elevated due to intensified travel around the Lunar New Year (29 January 2025):

- Millions of people are expected to travel for tourism and to visit their home countries during this holiday season.
- Most of this travel will be within Asian countries, but also to and from other parts of the world.
- Uncontrolled imports of pig products carried by travellers increase the risk of ASF spread and introduction.

RECOMMENDATION ACTIONS

In light of the elevated risk, FAO is calling on all Chief Veterinary Officers to increase ASF prevention and preparedness activities to reduce the likelihood of outbreaks and subsequent impacts on livelihoods and economies. This includes:

 Enhancing inspections at international borders, national administrative borders and high-risk traffic routes, based on risk analysis to minimize the risk of introducing potentially infected pork products.

Contacts

FAO Emergency Prevention System for Animal Health (EMPRES) EMPRES-Animal-Health@fao.org

- Improving biosecurity and good husbandry practices on farms to lower the risk of ASF virus introduction to domestic and wild pig populations at all levels, from national, international and internal administrative borders to sub-national and farm levels.
- Ensuring measures are in place for early detection, timely reporting and rapid containment of the virus, as delays can lead to rapid spread. Encouraging suspect disease reporting to veterinary authorities by farmers, hunters and other stakeholders through policies, and making provisions for adequate compensation if animals are culled.
- Implementing targeted sampling of animals with a higher likelihood of virus detection (i.e. dying or recently dead animals). The unspecific clinical signs require laboratory confirmation, necessitating adequate logistical capacity, equipment, reagents and skilled personnel.
- Considering active surveillance, particularly in areas using vaccination or where recombinant ASF virus has been confirmed or at risk of introduction. In both scenarios, clinical signs can be mild or subclinical. FAO urges Member Nations to submit samples of any suspected new variants to ASF reference laboratories (e.g. <u>Australian</u> <u>Centre for Disease Preparedness</u>).
- Collaborating closely with forestry and environment sectors, as well as game management authorities in contact with wild pig populations, to share information and jointly conduct ASF surveillance and prevention activities, in advance of potential virus introduction.
- Facilitating early reporting and response by consulting closely with the private sector (i.e. producers, traders and related businesses). Preparing and disseminating communication materials before ASF virus introduction can minimize misunderstanding and rumours. Maintaining a high level of awareness on ASF risks and management among veterinarians, farmers, butchers, hunters, international travellers and other stakeholders.
- **Reinforcing awareness campaigns.** FAO and WOAH have developed multilingual communication materials (available in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) as part of a joint communication campaign.

FAO's **One Health and Disease Control Group**, in collaboration with institutional partners, remains **fully committed to assisting and supporting** countries in enhancing preparedness, detection, emergency response, and recovery capabilities.

Required citation:

FAO. 2024. FAO alert on African swine fever – High risk of spread due to lunar new year holidays season. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3826en



© FAO, 2024 CD3826EN/1/12.24