

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER

Information Leaflet for Farmers



Introduction

African swine fever (ASF) is one of the most important and serious diseases of domestic pigs. It is caused by African swine fever virus. The disease may occur in acute, sub-acute or chronic forms. The acute form causes severe disease from which the majority of affected pigs die. There is no vaccine available for ASF. Humans are not susceptible to ASF.

Geographical distribution

ASF is present in countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In Europe the disease was confirmed in Spain, Portugal and Sardinia in 1960. It was eradicated from Portugal in 1993 and Spain in 1995, but remains endemic in Sardinia. Limited outbreaks occurred in Belgium (1985) and the Netherlands (1986). Disease was confirmed in Georgia in 2007, and it subsequently spread to Armenia, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The disease spread to Eastern Europe in January 2014, and has been present in wild boar and sometimes pigs in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia ever since. In June 2017 the disease was detected for the first time in wild boar in the Czech Republic, and in July in backyard pigs in Romania. ASF has never occurred in Ireland.

Species affected

ASF affects domestic pigs, European wild boar, warthogs and American wild pigs. All age groups are equally susceptible.

Clinical signs

Clinical signs appear after an incubation period of 5-15 days.

The clinical signs of ASF range from mild to severe, depending mainly on the virulence of the virus. The signs may be very similar to those of classical swine fever (CSF) and other pig diseases such as porcine dermatitis and nephropathy syndrome (PDNS).

In acute disease you may see:

- sudden death of animals, with few signs
- high fever (40.5-42°C)
- reddening of the skin (visible only in pale-skinned pigs) – tips of ears, tail, distal extremities, ventral aspects of chest and abdomen
- decreased appetite, listlessness, cyanosis and mobility
- inco-ordination within 24-48 hours before death
- vomiting, diarrhoea (sometimes bloody) and eye discharges
- death within 6 -13 days, or up to 20 days
- abortion
- mortality rate often approaches 100% (in domestic swine)

Transmission

The virus is found in all body fluids and tissues of infected pigs. Transmission occurs by:

- Direct contact with infected pigs, faeces or body fluids (including semen)
- Indirect contact via fomites such as equipment, vehicles or people that have contact with pigs
- Pigs eating infected pig meat or meat products
- Biological vectors - ticks of the species *Ornithodoros* (however these ticks are not present in Ireland)

Control measures if ASF is confirmed

If ASF is confirmed, EU legislation requires that all infected and exposed animals on infected premises are killed, carcasses are safely disposed of, infected premises are cleaned and disinfected, surveillance and tracing of potentially infected or exposed animals are carried out and strict control on movements of pigs and pig products within infected areas. ASF can be successfully eradicated if the disease is detected early and controls are rapidly introduced. There is no treatment or vaccine available for ASF.

Prevention

Good biosecurity is essential to the prevention of introduction of ASF into Ireland.

BIOSECURITY MEASURES THAT FARMERS CAN TAKE

- Only source **pigs and semen** of known health status
- Only allow essential **visitors** to enter your farm, and 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 pig-free period before entering your farm, if they have had contact with other pigs or wild boar (in addition to the measures for visitors above)
- Only allow **vehicles and equipment** on to the farm if they have been cleaned and disinfected beforehand
- Do not allow **food waste** (swill) to be fed to pigs – dispose of it safely.

The feeding of any food waste of animal origin or food waste which has been in contact with products of animal origin, whether raw or cooked, is illegal in Ireland

What to do if you suspect ASF

ASF is a **notifiable** disease. If you suspect the disease you must report it immediately to your local District Veterinary Office or the Department of Agriculture's headquarters at 01 6072000. Do not move any pigs, carcasses or anything else (e.g. feed or waste) until a Department of Agriculture veterinary inspector has carried out an examination. Laboratory tests are essential to detect the virus and confirm the diagnosis. If you have any doubts about the health of your herd, contact your veterinary practitioner.



Huddling and reddening of ears (PIADC)



Reddening of the legs (PIADC)



Inco-ordination and diarrhoea (PIADC)



Abortion (VLA)

Photos courtesy of: Plum Island Animal Disease Centre (PIADC) and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA), Weybridge

Further information is provided on the Department of Agriculture's website at: www.agriculture.gov.ie