

Frequently Asked Questions about African Swine Fever

【About African Swine Fever】

Q1. Does African Swine Fever (ASF) cause any impact on human?

A1. ASF is not a zoonotic disease. It is a disease in pigs which will not be transmitted to human.

Q2. Is it possible for ASF virus to mutate and subsequently become transmittable to human?

A2. Experts have pointed out that ASF virus has not mutated causing cross-species transmission in the past century.

Q3. What are the consequences of taking in infected pork?

A3. ASF will not be transmitted to human. Well-cooked pork and pork products are safe for consumption.

Q4. What measures does the Government take to ensure the food safety of fresh pork?

A4. All imported and local pigs have to undergo stringent ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses to ensure that pigs supplied to the market are fit for human consumption.

In addition, all live pig consignments from the Mainland are accompanied by valid health certificates which ensure the live pigs are from reliable source and in good health. The public should not buy pork from unknown sources and should thoroughly cook the pork before consumption.

Q5. Will infected pork be released to the market?

A5. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) staff inspect the health certificates of all live pig consignments from the Mainland and monitor the health status of live pigs at the boundary checkpoints.

All imported and local pigs have to undergo stringent ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses to ensure that pigs supplied to the market are fit for human consumption. Sampled testing will be conducted if necessary, such as on pigs suspected to be infected. The pigs will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be uninfected.

【Response strategy】

Q6. Given that ASF will not be transmitted to human, why is it necessary to take actions to guard against the disease?

A6. ASF is a highly contagious swine disease which could cause massive death in pigs within a very short period of time. Adding that there is currently no vaccine or treatment available, this disease poses severe threat to pig rearing sector.

The Government has to take early actions in response to ASF for three objectives:

1. to protect local pig farming sector by preventing the disease from infecting local pig farms;
2. to ensure the stable supply of live pigs in Hong Kong, striving to minimise the impact on supply of live pigs to Hong Kong due to the outbreak;
3. to prevent the disease from spreading to other places.

Q7. What preventive measures did the Government take in the past few months?

A7. Since the first ASF case on the Mainland in early August 2018, the Government has been closely monitoring the situation, staying vigilant and implementing corresponding measures in a timely manner. Highlights are as follows:

- AFCD has maintained close contact with pig farmers, stepped up inspection to all local pig farms, and requested them to implement proper biosecurity measures;
- Requested all local pig farms to step up the cleansing and disinfection of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving pig farms;
- Stepped up the cleansing and disinfection of vehicles and

personnel entering and leaving slaughterhouses, including the construction of disinfection pools in Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse;

- Suspended importation of breeders from the Mainland;
- Amended the licence conditions for livestock keeping to ban the storage or use of swill of pork origin or in contact with pork or pork products as feed from 12 January 2019;
- Devised a surveillance plan on ASF and conducted sampled testing when there are pigs suspected to be infected;
- Provide assistance and loans to facilitate farmers purchasing facilities for enhancing biosecurity; and
- FEHD has stepped up cooperation with the Custom and Excise Department (C&ED) to crack down on illegal importation of raw meat.

Q8. How does the Government step up its efforts on cracking down on illegal importation of raw meat?

A8. FEHD and C&ED have stepped up cooperation to crack down on illegal importation of meat by passengers into Hong Kong. Between January and November in 2018, FEHD has brought 294 prosecutions and issued 125 warning letters on the cases concerned. FEHD will only issue warning letters to those who have brought raw meat into the territory for the first time and those who have reported to C&ED. For those passengers who commit such act repeatedly, FEHD will prosecute direct without issuing warning letters.

Moreover, FEHD has enhanced publicity by posting posters at control points and disseminating information via social media to promote the message that it is an offence to carry raw meat into Hong Kong without a health certificate. FEHD will also publicise relevant information in MTR cabinet soon.

【Surveillance and testing】

Q9. How long does it take to test the ASF virus?

A9. A quick test could be carried out within a few hours after the samples are sent to the AFCD's Veterinary Laboratory. If the initial result is positive, further confirmatory test will be conducted as soon as possible and the laboratory report could

be provided within 24 hours.

If necessary, the laboratory will work during weekends and public holidays.

【Supply of live pigs to Hong Kong】

Q10. Will the Government consider suspending the supply of live pigs from the infected areas on the Mainland?

A10. When ASF virus is found in a pig farm on the Mainland, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs will declare the index farm to be an **infected place**. All pigs within the infected place will be culled and disposed of. The area within 3 kilometre (km) radius of the infected place will be declared as **infected area**. Thorough disinfection will be carried out at pig farms within the infected area. Culling operations will be carried out at these farms subject to the result of laboratory tests and disease investigation. The area within 10 km radius of the infected area will be declared as **affected area** where movement of pigs is prohibited. Hence, pig farms within the affected area are not allowed to send out pigs to any other places, including Hong Kong.

The General Administration of Customs (GAC) will update the list of registered Mainland pig farms for supply to Hong Kong (registered farms) from time to time, based on the latest development of ASF outbreak on the Mainland. Although there is no outbreak in any registered farms so far, taking the list updated by GAC on 26 December 2018 as an example, supply from 20 registered farms which are located within or near to the affected area has been suspended, for the purpose of disease prevention and control.

Q11. Does the ASF outbreak on the Mainland have any impact on the supply of live pigs in Hong Kong?

A11. The Government has been maintaining liaison with the Mainland authorities and importers to ensure the supply of live pigs as far as possible. In recent weeks, the supply was lower than usual due to different factors such as holidays and lower market demand, but the price has not shown significant

fluctuations. We will continue to closely monitor the supply.

【Culling and compensation arrangements】

Q12. What are the culling arrangements if ASF virus is found in a local pig farm?

A12. All pigs in the infected farm will be culled, and the farm will be cleansed and disinfected thoroughly. AFCD will also block and prohibit the movement of pigs of other farms within 3 km of the infected farm, and closely monitor the situation. The pigs will be supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be uninfected.

If live pigs have been supplied to a slaughterhouse by the infected farm within 96 hours prior to the identification of ASF in that farm, all pigs from that infected farm which still remain in the slaughterhouse would be culled. Other pigs in the slaughterhouse will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be uninfected. The slaughterhouse concerned will be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after clearance.

Q13. What are the arrangements in response to the outbreak of ASF in slaughterhouses?

A13. ASF virus may be found in slaughterhouses in three scenarios:

1. Live pigs have been supplied to a slaughterhouse by a local pig farm or a registered farm within 96 hours prior to the identification of ASF in that farm.
2. A consignment of pigs from a local pig farm or a registered farm on the way to a slaughterhouse is found to be infected, but those pigs have yet to come into contact with other pigs in the slaughterhouse.
3. A pig in the lairage in a slaughterhouse is found to be infected.

In the first scenario, if pigs have been supplied to a slaughterhouse by an infected farm within 96 hours prior to the identification of ASF, all pigs from that farm remaining in the slaughterhouse will be culled. Other pigs in the slaughterhouse will be subject to thorough examination by

veterinary surgeons. Sampled testing will be conducted if necessary, such as when the pigs are suspected to be infected. The pigs will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be not infected. The slaughterhouse concerned will be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after clearance.

In the second scenario, the whole consignment of pigs will be culled. As for other pigs, thorough examination will be conducted by the veterinary surgeons, and sampled testing will be conducted if necessary, such as when the pigs are suspected to be infected. The pigs will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be not infected. The slaughterhouse concerned will be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after clearance.

In the third scenario, all pigs in the slaughterhouse will be culled. The slaughterhouse will be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after clearance. As the infected pig may come from either a local farm or a registered farm, or may be infected after entering the slaughterhouse, AFCD will block the movement of pigs of those local farms which have supplied pigs to the slaughterhouse within 96 hours prior to the identification of ASF and carry out an in-depth investigation, until it can rule out the possibility that the local farms concerned are infected. As for the registered farms which have supplied pigs to the slaughterhouse within 96 hours prior to the identification of ASF, the Centre for Food Safety of FEHD will notify the Mainland authorities concerned.

Q14. If a registered is infected with ASF or located within or near to the infected area, how will the Government follow up?

A14. According to GAC's arrangements, supply from registered farms, which are infected with ASF or located within or near to the infected area, will be suspended with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of disease prevention and control.

All pigs from the infected farms which still remain in slaughterhouse(s) would be culled. As for other pigs in slaughterhouse(s), thorough examination will be conducted by the veterinary surgeons, and sampled testing will be conducted if necessary, such as when the pigs are suspected to be infected.

The pigs will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be not infected. The slaughterhouse concerned will be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected after clearance.

Q15. What is the rationale behind the culling arrangements in response to the outbreak of ASF in slaughterhouses?

- A15. When devising the arrangements, the Government has taken into account various factors, including –
1. epidemiological characteristics of ASF;
 2. reference to the experience of the World Organisation for Animal Health and in various places such as the European Union and on the Mainland, as well as experts' opinions;
 3. risk of infection at local pig farms;
 4. operation of slaughterhouses; and
 5. impact on the public.

All imported and local pigs have to undergo stringent ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses to ensure that pigs supplied to the market are fit for human consumption. Sampled testing will be conducted if necessary, such as when the pigs are suspected to be infected. The pigs will be slaughtered and supplied to the market only after they are confirmed to be uninfected. In addition, the cleansing and disinfection of vehicles and personnel entering and leaving slaughterhouses have been strengthened. Adding that the ban on use of swill will soon be effective, it should be effective in preventing the spread of ASF virus from slaughterhouses to local farms.

Q16. Why do all pigs in a local pig farm infected with ASF have to be culled?

- A16. Since the rearing period of pigs is six months or more and ASF is highly contagious, massive infection will occur within the same farm or at nearby farms once there are pigs infected at a farm. In order to step up the prevention and control of the disease for local pig farming sector, it is necessary to cull all pigs in the infected farm, as well as thoroughly cleanse and disinfect the infected farm to stop ASF from spreading further.

Q17. How long will a slaughterhouse be closed if it is infected with ASF? What is the rationale behind?

A17. When a slaughterhouse is infected with ASF, it must be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected for at least two rounds after clearance in order to remove any potential sources of ASF virus, such as organic matter (blood and secretions etc.). The slaughterhouse could be reopened only after it has undergone stringent veterinary inspection which confirmed that it is free from ASF virus.

Q18. What is the compensation for the pigs culled?

A18. Each pig culled will be compensated according to the relevant market price of its type (i.e. porkers, breeding pigs, piglets).