

AFRICAN SWINE FEVER (ASF) Q&A

What is African Swine Fever?

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a disease of wild and domestic pigs that causes extremely high mortality. ASF is a serious disease of pigs, but does not pose a risk to public health or food safety. **Humans cannot contract African Swine Fever.**¹

The disease causes fever, lack of appetite, and bleeding of a pig's internal organs. Many pigs develop a fever and die before the disease is diagnosed. Death is often the first indication of an ASF outbreak.

Does ASF pose a risk to humans?

African Swine Fever cannot be spread to humans, so it is not a threat to public health, nor is it a food safety concern.⁷

How is ASF spread?

There are three modes of transmission for ASF: direct contact, indirect contact, and vector-borne.

Direct transmission occurs when an infected pig comes into contact with an uninfected pig. Indirect transmission occurs when the virus is transmitted via an object, such as contaminated feed or persons carrying the virus on their clothing or shoes. Indirect transmission can also occur if pigs eat food waste that contains infected pork products. The disease can also be transmitted to pigs via soft-shelled ticks and other parasites (vector-borne).²

Because the disease is so deadly to pigs, the U.S. pork industry and the U.S. government take steps, such as confiscating pork products from ASF-affected countries and disinfecting the shoes of people who have traveled abroad to ASF-affected countries.³

Does ASF exist in the United States?

African Swine Fever does not exist in the U.S., and never has. Because the U.S. has one of the most comprehensive disease prevention and eradication programs anywhere in the world, it also has one of the healthiest livestock populations.

Why is ASF such a concern to the U.S. pork industry?

African Swine Fever cannot be spread to humans, so it is not a threat to public health, nor is it a food safety concern. However, the disease is deadly to pigs, causing up to 94% mortality if pigs are infected.⁴

Because of this high mortality, the World Organization for Animal Health considers ASF a notifiable disease, therefore it is a trade-limiting foreign animal disease. Countries with confirmed cases of ASF are subject to international trade restrictions, which help reduce the likelihood of introducing the disease to other countries.⁵ Because the U.S. exports approximately 27% of all pork products, trade is very important to the industry.⁶ The closing of other countries' borders to U.S. pork would likely have a devastating impact on the industry.

Helpful Links:

National Pork Board ASF Website: <https://www.pork.org/production/animal-disease/foreign-animal-disease-resources/>

United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information/african-swine-fever/african-swine-fever>

World Organization for Animal Health (OIE): http://www.oie.int/index.php?id=169&L=0&htmfile=chapitre_asf.htm

References:

- ^{1,7} United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: African Swine Fever. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information/african-swine-fever/african-swine-fever>. Accessed May 28, 2019.
- ² World Organization for Animal Health (OIE): African Swine Fever. <http://www.oie.int/en/animal-health-in-the-world/animal-diseases/african-swine-fever/>. Accessed May 28, 2019.
- ³ United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: African Swine Fever, What Travelers Need to Know. <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/swine-disease-information/african-swine-fever/african-swine-fever>. Accessed May 28, 2019.
- ⁴ Dr. Andrey Pershin, Senior Research Fellow with the Reference Laboratory for African Swine Fever. Proceedings of the 6th Global Pig Forum, May 16-17, Wuhan, Hubei, PRC.
- ⁵ World Organization for Animal Health (OIE): OIE-listed diseases, infections, and infestations in force in 2019. <http://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/oie-listed-diseases-2019/>. Accessed June 18, 2019.
- ⁶ United States Meat Export Federation, Frequently Asked Questions. 2017. <https://www.usmef.org/about-usmef/faq/>. Accessed May 28, 2019.