

Government announces ASF testing results

The Government today (September 3) announced the test result of an African Swine Fever (ASF) case. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department tonight confirmed that ASF virus was found in the samples of three pigs from the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH).

The concerned batch of pigs from a Mainland registered pig farm for supply to Hong Kong was admitted to the SSSH on September 2. They passed the inspection by veterinary surgeons with no ASF symptoms detected. Until the early morning on September 3, three of the pigs were found dead prior to slaughtering. Veterinary surgeons then inspected the pig carcasses and collected samples for testing of ASF virus.

The spokesman said that after the first ASF case occurred in Hong Kong, the Government, taking into account the views of local and overseas experts and with the support of live pig trade, started imposing a daily clearance arrangement which means all live pigs will be slaughtered within 24 hours upon admittance into SSSH. Under the new arrangement, lairages in different areas of the slaughterhouse will be cleared out and undergo thorough cleansing and disinfection every day. Since the period of stay for pigs in the slaughterhouse is short and the comprehensive daily cleansing and disinfection, together with the enhancement of cleaning and disinfection of vehicles transporting pigs, the risk of ASF spreading in Hong Kong has been largely minimised.

At the second meeting of the standing group of experts on ASF recently organised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the attending experts had an in-depth discussion on the prevention and control measures against ASF. They regarded that each region should take its own situation into consideration, such as the stocking density, demand and supply of live pigs etc, to formulate effective and practical measures and policies. Given that the local slaughterhouse has already implemented the daily clearance arrangement, the experts considered that the possibilities of infection and spread of the virus to other pigs in Hong Kong has been largely minimised. Therefore, if an ASF case occurs in the local slaughterhouse, the closure of the relevant slaughterhouse and mass culling of other pigs are considered not necessary. Other pigs can be slaughtered as usual and supplied to market for consumption.

The spokesman pointed that with regard to this case, the operation of the slaughterhouse was not affected and the slaughtering process will be carried out as usual. He stressed that ASF will not infect humans and pose food safety risk. All imported and local pigs have to undergo ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in slaughterhouses to ensure that pigs to be supplied to the market are safe and fit for human consumption. Well-cooked pork is safe for consumption.

The Government has informed the relevant Mainland authorities of the case and supply of live pigs to Hong Kong should not be affected by this test result.