

Interdepartmental efforts in prevention and control of African Swine Fever (with photo)

In view of the local multiple outbreaks of African Swine Fever (ASF) recently, an interdepartmental meeting convened by the Acting Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, was held today (December 30) with the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) to plan for various works to stop virus transmission in local pig farms. International veterinary expert, Dr Leslie Sims, has also been invited to attend the meeting and to provide expert opinions.

Miss Wong said, "The Government has attached great importance to the impact of ASF to local pig farmers and the pig rearing industry, and has been closely monitoring the latest developments. While ASF is not a zoonotic disease and will not infect humans or cause any food safety risk, it could cause massive infection in pigs within a short period of time, and the death rate of infected pigs is very high. If the spread is not contained, it will seriously impact pig farmers and the pig rearing industry. As such, we should seriously and promptly respond in order to stop virus transmission in local pig farms."

The expert recognised the measures currently adopted by relevant departments and will finalise the recommendations on further enhanced measures with the AFCD in the coming few days. The AFCD will discuss with the pig rearing industry on the implementation of the enhanced measures so as to control the transmission of ASF at the soonest.

She added that, "Our aim is to exercise precautions before the spread of the virus, so as to block the transmission of ASF in local pig farms."

The AFCD has conducted investigations on the source of virus in pig farms where infected pigs have been identified, as well as stepping up the surveillance of the activities of nearby wild pigs. The AFCD held a seminar for pig farmers on specific preventive measures and biosecurity advice against ASF. The Guidelines for Reporting Cases of African Swine Fever has been launched by the AFCD with a view to assisting pig farmers in identifying suspected cases for early reporting. Also, the AFCD is conducting visits in phases to all local licensed pig farms to ensure biosecurity measures have been properly implemented. To enhance transparency, the AFCD is maintaining close liaison with pig farmers via messaging groups, keeping them informed of the latest situation of ASF and ways of prevention. The FEHD will continue to stringently impose daily clearance arrangement and conduct cleaning and disinfection of Mainland and local live pig transportation vehicles at slaughterhouses. The FEHD and the EPD have also enhanced the handling of pig carcasses and pig feces respectively. The departments have strengthened the

cleaning and disinfection arrangements in all areas.

