

Local pig samples test positive for ASF virus

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (November 23) announced that samples taken from a pig farm in Yuen Long had tested positive for African Swine Fever (ASF) virus.

An AFCD spokesman said, "AFCD staff yesterday (November 22) and today inspected a licensed pig farm at Lau Fau Shan, Yuen Long, and took samples from 62 pigs for testing. Results so far showed that samples from at least 5 pigs tested positive for ASF virus. The AFCD has immediately suspended transportation of any pigs from the farm concerned until further notice according to the contingency plan on ASF. The AFCD is arranging culling of all pigs, totaling around 1 900, on the farm concerned for the sake of prudence. The culling operations will commence on Saturday (November 25)."

He further said, "AFCD staff immediately notified all local pig farmers of this incident and reminded them to alert the AFCD immediately if abnormal health condition is observed in pigs. In addition, AFCD staff inspected the other three pig farms within three kilometres of the index farm. One of these pig farms has no pigs on farm. For the other two pig farms, samples were taken from pigs for ASF testing. Test results were all negative and no abnormalities were found in the health of those pigs. For the sake of prudence, the AFCD has also temporarily suspended movements of pigs on these farms until further notice. No reports of abnormalities from pig farms outside the three-kilometre zone have been received so far. AFCD staff had reminded local pig farmers to ensure biosecurity measures have been properly implemented; and continue close surveillance to detect pigs with abnormalities and if a farm is infected as early as possible."

The spokesman stressed that ASF is not a zoonotic disease and will not infect humans, hence does not cause any food safety risk. Pork cooked thoroughly is safe for consumption. Members of the public do not need to be concerned.

The present case does not affect the operation of local slaughterhouses nor the overall supply of live pigs. Since June 2019, a daily clearance arrangement whereby live pigs will be slaughtered within 24 hours upon admittance has been imposed in Sheung Shui and Tsuen Wan slaughterhouses. Under the arrangement, lairages in different areas of the slaughterhouses will be cleared out and undergo thorough cleaning and disinfection every day to further enhance the bio-security of, and minimise the risk of infection among pigs, in the slaughterhouses.

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the AFCD will continue to stringently conduct cleaning and disinfection of Mainland live pig transportation vehicles and their counterparts for local pigs at slaughterhouses to minimise the risk of cross infection of ASF. Mainland live

pig vehicles and local ones should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected every time they leave the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse (SSSH), and the respective designated positions for their cleaning and disinfection are separated. Manpower and equipment of the SSSH have been strengthened immediately for cleaning and disinfection of the vehicles. In light of these stepped up measures, the slaughterhouses need not be closed and other pigs need not be culled.

As culling operations take time, the AFCD will release updated operation information every day starting from November 25 on the departmental web page, www.afcd.gov.hk for the public.