

Pig culling operation on Sheung Shui pig farm with pigs found with ASF virus completed

Regarding the incident announced on January 3, where samples of pigs from a Sheung Shui pig farm tested positive for African Swine Fever (ASF), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched a culling operation on the farm concerned on January 5. The operation was completed today (January 7).

An AFCD spokesman said, "According to the contingency plan on ASF, the AFCD has sent staff to cull and handle a total of 489 pigs on the licensed farm in Kwu Tung, Sheung Shui, since January 5. The operation was completed today. All culled and handled pigs were sent to the West New Territories Landfill for dumping according to established procedures."

The spokesman further said, "The AFCD will arrange thorough cleaning and disinfection of the farm, and has notified the World Organisation for Animal Health of this incident. An investigation and tracing of the source of the virus in collaboration with international experts is underway."

Regarding the seven pig farms within three kilometres of the index farm, transport of any pigs from them is still suspended for the sake of prudence. The AFCD will arrange veterinary inspection of the pig farms in the area and collect further samples from pigs for ASF virus testing as appropriate. If no abnormal health condition is noted on the pigs, and all samples have tested negative for the ASF virus, pigs on these pig farms would be allowed to be transported to slaughterhouses.

The AFCD will continue to keep local pig farms under close surveillance as well as conducting tests if necessary. The AFCD has also reminded all farmers to ensure biosecurity measures have been properly implemented and alert the Department immediately if an abnormal health condition is observed in pigs. Meanwhile, AFCD staff are currently inspecting all local licensed pig farms to ensure biosecurity measures have been properly implemented. Surveillance of activities of wild pigs in the vicinity of the index farm has also been stepped up.

Moreover, the AFCD has implemented an emergency measure on handling dead pigs on local pig farms according to an international veterinary expert since January 3. All farms are required to collect and submit to the AFCD nasal swab samples from pig carcasses for ASF virus testing. Disposal of carcasses can only be arranged upon confirmation of a negative result. Sampling materials and protective clothing have been distributed to local pig farms. Close communication is kept with pig farmers to update them on the latest situation and means of prevention of ASF via SMS groups.

The spokesman stressed that ASF is not a zoonotic disease and will not infect humans, hence does not present any food safety risk. Pork cooked thoroughly is safe for consumption. Members of the public do not need to be concerned. The incident does not affect the operation of local slaughterhouses nor the overall supply of live pigs.