

Pig culling operation on Yuen Long pig farm with pigs found with ASF virus completed

Regarding the incident announced on January 14 where samples of pigs from a Yuen Long pig farm tested positive for African Swine Fever (ASF), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) launched a culling operation on January 16 on the farm concerned. The operation was completed today (January 19).

An AFCD spokesman said, "According to the contingency plan on ASF, the AFCD has sent staff to cull and handle a total of 1 393 pigs on the licensed farm in San Tin, Yuen Long, since January 16. 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 under way."

There are eight pig farms within 3 kilometres of this index farm, and transport of any pigs from them is suspended for the sake of prudence. The AFCD will arrange veterinary inspections 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 regarding 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 that good 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 in phases to ensure good biosecurity measures have been properly implemented. Surveillance of the 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 on the advice of 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 by the farms upon confirmation of a negative result.

The spokesman said, "The AFCD has implemented a series of measures. (1) The AFCD collaborated with an international veterinary expert to provide guidelines on biosecurity measures for local pig farms earlier. (2) The AFCD

has further explained and provided training to the industry to facilitate prompt implementation and strict observation of the biosecurity measures specific to their pig farms, thereby effectively containing the spread of ASF on local pig farms on different levels. (3) In order to strengthen the knowledge of local pig farmers of the clinical signs of ASF for early detection and reporting of abnormality of pigs, the AFCD has launched the Guidelines for Reporting Cases of African Swine Fever to assist pig farmers in identifying suspected cases for early reporting and to take appropriate follow-up. (4) AFCD staff have been distributing sampling materials and protective clothing to all local pig farms. (5) AFCD staff are keeping close communication with pig farmers to update them on the latest situation 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.