

Press release: Pig keepers warned not to feed kitchen scraps to pigs due to African swine fever risk

The warning comes after the risk level of African swine fever entering the UK was raised over the summer following spread of the disease in Eastern and Central Europe.

There has never been a case of African swine fever in the UK and it does not affect humans, but it is potentially fatal to pigs. If the disease were to reach the UK it could have a devastating effect on our export market and would also mean the humane culling of pigs on infected premises to prevent further spread.

Keepers are being reminded that it is illegal to feed catering waste of any description or domestic food waste to farm animals in the UK, including pigs kept as pets, as some of the outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe have been attributed to wild boar or domestic pigs consuming contaminated pork or pork products. Viruses such as foot and mouth disease could also be introduced to the UK through food products. This includes food from vegetarian kitchens, as there is still a risk of cross contamination from products of animal origin such as milk.

Strict hygiene measures are essential in preventing disease – people should not take meat or meat products into areas where pigs are kept and should only eat food in designated areas such as staff rooms or the farm kitchen. Pig keepers, farm staff and anyone in contact with pigs should wash their hands before and after eating or preparing food.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

The introduction of African swine fever would have an enormous impact on our pig industry. No matter how many pigs you keep, you need to be aware of the potential consequences of feeding waste food to your animals. Not only is it illegal, but you run the risk of spreading disease which could be fatal to your livestock.

You can purchase a range of pig foods from your local agricultural merchant that can be safely fed to your pigs and which is the most reliable way of giving them a balanced diet. Good biosecurity is also essential for minimising disease risk, such as providing dedicated clothing and boots for workers and preventing vehicles which may be contaminated from entering pig premises.

The UK suffered the consequences of pigs being fed illegal waste food in the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001. That outbreak is thought to have originated from pigs being fed catering waste containing the virus, which

came from outside the UK. The outbreak resulted in the destruction of more than 10 million cattle and sheep and cost the UK many millions of pounds.

Chief Executive of the National Pig Association, Dr Zoe Davies, said:

The health of our pigs is fundamentally important to our sector. A notifiable disease outbreak would not only needlessly result in the loss of many pigs and annihilate our burgeoning export market, but would significantly impact on countless families, their staff, local businesses and tourism for months. Feeding illegal food waste, however harmless it might seem at the time, is just not worth the risk.

1. This press release is issued jointly by the Animal and Plant Health Agency, The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government, Scottish Government, The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Northern Ireland, The National Pig Association, The British Pig Association, The Pig Veterinary Society, The British Veterinary Association and Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) Pork.
2. [EU-wide animal by-product legislation](#) states that feeding farmed animals with catering waste or feed material containing, or derived from, catering waste is illegal. Doing so can result in prosecution.
3. Fruit and vegetable material that originated outside the kitchen, which has never entered the kitchen and which has not come into contact with material of animal origin can be fed, such as vegetables grown in domestic gardens. Some commercial food waste can also be fed if it has undergone the correct animal by-products processing and meets the requirements of the [Feed Hygiene Regulation](#). The safest option if you are in doubt is not to feed any food waste to your animals.
4. [More information about African swine fever and how to spot it](#). Additional information can be found on [AHDB Pork's website](#). If you suspect African swine fever you should notify [the Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) immediately.
5. For more information, contact Defra press office on 020 8225 7618 or out of hours on 0345 051 8486.