

# Local pig samples test positive for ASF virus

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) today (January 2) announced that samples taken from a pig farm in Yuen Long had tested positive for the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus.

An AFCD spokesman said, "Samples were taken from 13 pigs at a licensed pig farm in San Tin, Yuen Long, yesterday (January 1). Upon testing by AFCD staff, samples from eight pigs were found positive for the 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, totalling over 400 on the farm concerned, for the sake of prudence."

He further said, "Positive cases should be seriously and promptly handled as the effect of ASF is very lethal to pigs. If the spread is not contained, a large number of pigs will die and hence seriously impacting pig farmers and the pig rearing industry. 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, the AFCD has arranged staff to inspect the eight pig farms within three kilometres of the index farm and collect pig samples for ASF testing. For the sake of prudence, the AFCD has been suspending movements of pigs on those eight pig farms until further notice. No reports of abnormalities from pig farms outside the three-kilometre zone have been received so far. AFCD staff are conducting visits in phases to all local licensed pig farms to ensure biosecurity measures have been properly implemented; and continued close surveillance to detect pigs with abnormalities and if a farm is infected as early as possible. Surveillance of the activities of wild pigs in the vicinity of the index farm has also been stepped up. Besides, the AFCD is maintaining close contact with pig farmers via text message groups, keeping them informed of the latest situation of ASF and ways to prevent the infection of pigs."

The spokesman stressed that ASF is not a zoonotic disease and will not infect humans, hence does not cause any human health and food safety risk. Regardless of whether the pigs are infected with ASF, pork cooked thoroughly is safe for consumption. Members of the public do not need to be concerned. The AFCD held a seminar for pig farmers on specific preventive measures and biosecurity advice against ASF, with a view to enhancing vigilance of the industry in prevention of further spread of ASF. Meanwhile, 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.

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 biosecurity 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 operation takes time, the AFCD will release updated operation information every day later on the departmental web page, [www.afcd.gov.hk](http://www.afcd.gov.hk), for the public.

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## [Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (January 2) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From December 24 to 30 last year, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 63 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Chung Chi House, Chung On Estate, Ma On Shan; and
2. A male patient, aged 72 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Tower 10, Parc Royale, Sha Tin.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

In 2023 (as of December 30), 121 LD cases had been reported. In 2022 and 2021, there were 80 and 69 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;

- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 µm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

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## **[Two persons sentenced for violating anti-epidemic regulation](#)**

The Department of Health (DH) today (January 2) announced that two persons were sentenced by the Magistrates' Courts in the past month (December 1 to 31, 2023) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E).

The cases involved two females aged 23 and 51, and the dates of violating the relevant regulation were March 28, 2020, and December 23, 2021, respectively. They were fined up to \$6,000 by the Magistrates' Courts.

The DH will continue its actions against those who have breached the relevant regulations.

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## **[Exchange Fund Bills tender results](#)**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date : January 2, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : M2401  
Issue date : January 3, 2024  
Maturity date : January 31, 2024  
Amount applied : HK\$7,980 MN  
Amount allotted : HK\$2,000 MN  
Average yield accepted : 4.49 PCT  
Highest yield accepted : 4.55 PCT  
Pro rata ratio\* : About 44 PCT  
Average tender yield : 4.60 PCT

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Tender date : January 2, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : Q2401  
Issue date : January 3, 2024  
Maturity date : April 3, 2024  
Amount applied : HK\$175,739 MN  
Amount allotted : HK\$62,571 MN  
Average yield accepted : 4.44 PCT  
Highest yield accepted : 4.48 PCT  
Pro rata ratio\* : About 70 PCT  
Average tender yield : 4.54 PCT

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Tender date : January 2, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : H2430  
Issue date : January 3, 2024  
Maturity date : July 3, 2024  
Amount applied : HK\$53,750 MN  
Amount allotted : HK\$19,600 MN  
Average yield accepted : 4.20 PCT  
Highest yield accepted : 4.22 PCT  
Pro rata ratio\* : About 64 PCT  
Average tender yield : 4.26 PCT

\*"Pro rata ratio" refers to the average percentage of allotment with respect to each tender participant's tendered amount at the "highest yield accepted" level.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning January 8, 2024:

Tender date : January 9, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : M2402  
Issue date : January 10, 2024  
Maturity date : February 7, 2024  
Tenor : 28 Days  
Amount on offer : HK\$2,000 MN

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Tender date : January 9, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : Q2402  
Issue date : January 10, 2024  
Maturity date : April 10, 2024  
Tenor : 91 Days  
Amount on offer : HK\$62,862 MN

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Tender date : January 9, 2024  
Paper on offer : EF Bills  
Issue number : H2431  
Issue date : January 10, 2024  
Maturity date : July 10, 2024  
Tenor : 182 Days  
Amount on offer : HK\$19,000 MN

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## Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, January 2, 2024 is 103.6 (up 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, December 30, 2023 was 103.5 (up 0.3 against last Friday's index).