

MEAT OF THE MATTER

African Swine Fever – One of the Big Three is Spreading

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The National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) is dedicated to preventing an outbreak of the African Swine Fever (ASF) virus in the United States as it spreads through Asia and Europe. Working with the USDA and our allied industry organizations, our efforts today include:

- *Identifying and prioritizing research needs to better prevent—and respond to if necessary—the introduction of ASF to the U.S.*
- *Working with the USDA to ensure that any and all available countermeasures are in place at ports and borders to help prevent people, meat, and feed ingredients from bringing in ASF.*
- *Making sure that the pork industry—especially farmers—has the best and most current information about biosecurity measures to protect against ASF.*
- *Continuing to lobby aggressively for a Farm Bill Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccine bank—this ask also includes needed enhancements to our animal health laboratory capacity and foreign animal disease prevention and preparedness.*

The following paper details the threat posed by ASF, outlines NPPC's ongoing efforts to support containment and identifies producer actions to prevent an outbreak.

What is African Swine Fever?

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a viral disease that causes high mortality in domestic and wild pigs. Along with Classical Swine Fever and FMD, it is one of the “big three” highly transmissible diseases of swine that would stop our export markets cold if identified in the United States.

ASF spreads through close contact with infected animals or their excretions, or through feeding uncooked contaminated meat to susceptible pigs. In Africa, it is also spread by warthogs and other native pigs that do not show clinical signs of the disease, as well as by soft-bodied ticks. ASF is very hardy in the environment. ASF virus does not infect other animals or humans, and there are no food safety implications. There is no vaccine for ASF (the National Pork Board has funded several development studies, but to date an effective vaccine has not been found).

Active Outbreaks of African Swine Fever

ASF had been largely eliminated from most of the world, with the exception of Africa, prior to 2007. In 2007, an outbreak was identified in western Asia in the Caucasus region of Georgia. The disease was spread through wild boar movements and illegal transport of meat across Russia and many of the Eastern European and Baltic nations.

On August 3, 2018, it was reported that China had its first case of ASF. The genome sequence of the Chinese virus is very similar to the virus found in Georgia, Russia and Europe. By August 23, 2018, four outbreaks had been reported, including one at a packing plant that received positive pigs from a fifth location. The outbreak farms are in pig-dense areas, and some positive pigs were transported through additional pig-dense areas.

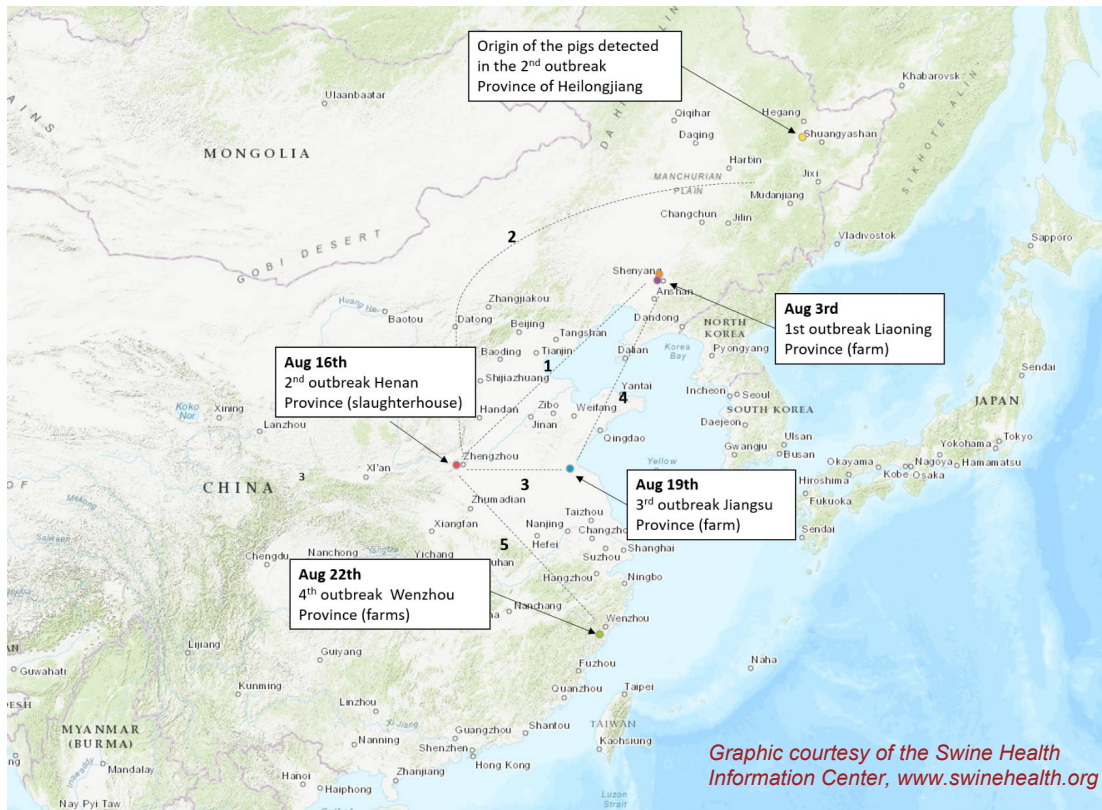


Figure 1:

Distances by road from different points:

- 1: 870 miles (1,400 km)
- 2: 1,400 miles (2,253 km)
- 3: 350 miles (563 km)
- 4: 800 miles (1,288 km)
- 5: 500 miles (800km).

What is the Risk to the United States Pork Industry?

There are several ways the ASF virus could make its way to the United States, including: international travelers with contaminated footwear/clothing or who are carrying infected meat products; importation of contaminated meat products; and importation of contaminated feed ingredients. In each of these cases, the contaminated article would need to either come into contact with or be fed to susceptible pigs.

What Steps are Being Taken to Protect the United States Pork Industry?

- NPPC, the National Pork Board, the Swine Health Information Center (SHIC) and the American Association of Swine Veterinarians (AASV) have been in close contact with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to discuss ways to prevent ASF from entering the United States. These organizations have developed a list of potential actions for preventing and, if needed, responding to an ASF outbreak.
- The industry organizations and the USDA are committed to open and timely communication on this situation and to identifying and implementing increased protective actions. The USDA has a Risk Identification Unit that monitors the disease situation globally and evaluates changes in risk status. The industry and the Risk Identification Unit are working together to provide real-time, two-way information so that increased risk can be rapidly identified and recommendations can be made for additional protective steps.
- The USDA prohibits the import of fresh meat from ASF-positive zones (including entire countries that do not have recognized zones or regionalization), and the industry has worked closely with the USDA to understand the European ASF zoning and regionalization process. USDA also prohibits the import of live animals from ASF-positive zones.

- The USDA has taken steps to coordinate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to enhance inspections of passengers, luggage, and cargo on planes arriving from China and Russia as well as other Eastern European locations. Sampling and monitoring of imported products that may pose a risk of ASF transmission is also being considered.
- The industry organizations have worked closely with the USDA for over a year to validate foreign animal disease (including ASF) testing using oral fluids. Currently, there is a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test validated that can use whole blood or tissues. The USDA has conducted an evaluation of laboratory capacity to test for ASF.
- The Swine Health Information Center (SHIC) has funded currently active projects to find ways to neutralize the virus in feed ingredients. Current SHIC-funded projects have also been designed to validate sampling methods for testing feed ingredients for viral contamination.
- SHIC is currently researching--with results expected soon--feed pathogen mitigation options, including: feed additives; component holding time and temperature before processing; hazard analysis and risk-based preventive controls and blockchain strategies.
- Since feeding uncooked or undercooked infected meat to pigs is a known pathway for ASF transmission, NPPC has asked the USDA to increase its compliance inspections for licensed waste feeders and searches for non-licensed waste feeding facilities.
- Evaluation of all imports from China to assess their potential to be used in the pork supply chain is underway. An updated risk assessment for ASF entry into the United States from China, and prioritizing imported products by identified risk, needs to be developed.
- ASF-specific emergency response exercises are being planned with participation from allied industries, the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), and state and federal animal health officials. Enhanced response and communication coordination with Canada and Mexico is also being planned.

What can Producers do to Protect Their Herds?

- Until we learn more about this situation, we recommend extreme caution if you are considering hosting someone from an ASF positive region of the world at farms or feed mills. If visitors are hosted, the USDA Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory on Plum Island recommends a five-day downtime for anyone planning to have contact with susceptible species after working with diseases and animals on the island. Consider using these same recommendations on farms.
- Review your biosecurity protocols. If you have workers from ASF positive countries or regions, make sure you have a downtime policy for workers returning from visits home. It must be stressed to such workers that they are not allowed to bring meat from their home country into the United States.
- Fill out the Foreign Animal Disease Preparation Checklist found [here](#). Additionally, we strongly suggest enrolling in the Secure Pork Supply program at www.SecurePork.org.
- Visit with your feed suppliers to discuss the origin of the feed ingredients they are using in your diets.

Producers Should:

- ✓ **Use caution when hosting on-farm visitors from an ASF positive region of the world; follow downtime recommendations from USDA's Plum Island Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory.**
- ✓ **Review your biosecurity protocols.**
- ✓ **Fill out the Foreign Animal Disease Preparation Checklist found [here](#) and enroll in the Secure Pork Supply program.**
- ✓ **Visit with your feed suppliers to discuss the origin of the feed ingredients they are using in your diets.**

Farm Bill Funding

NPPC has been prioritizing funding for the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program in the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization. While much of our effort has focused on the FMD vaccine bank portion of this funding, the ask includes mandatory annual funding of \$30 million for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network and \$70 million for state animal health emergency prevention and preparedness. This funding is critical for animal disease prevention and surveillance. Given the lack of an ASF vaccine, this funding is more important than ever—it is critical to protecting our industry.

In summary, NPPC is working closely with the USDA and the other industry organizations to first prevent ASF from entering the U.S. swine herd and to be prepared to respond should an outbreak occur. We are actively identifying and prioritizing critical research needs, working with the USDA to make sure that at a national level all appropriate biosecurity measures are being implemented, and aggressively advocating for our animal health-related funding in the Farm Bill. We are also making it a top priority to ensure that you have all the information you need to evaluate the risk to your operation. Please take a look at the Secure Pork Supply program and talk to your feed suppliers about their sources. Preventing ASF from devastating our industry is one of NPPC's top priorities.

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