



Thai Agriculture to Restore ASF-Free Status As Soon As Possible



Chalermchai directed Director-General of Department of Livestock Development (DLD) to work with all network partners to contain "ASF", aiming to restore the disease-free status as soon as possible. He confirmed there had been no cover-up and is willing to clarify any issues raised. The government is ready to urgently help farmers facing unusual death the of animals through DLD hotline at 063-225-6888.

On January 13, 2022, Dr. Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives revealed that according to the detection of ASF in a pig sample by surface swabs at a slaughterhouse in Nakhon Pathom province, the DLD laboratory has confirmed the positive result. He had always been concerned over this matter from the beginning and demanded DLD to act immediately. Dr. Sorawit Thanito (DMV), Director-General of DLD has expedited the process by working closely with relevant network partners to control the disease as soon as possible.

A technical working group meeting on preventive control and eradication of ASF in swine has been convened. The official statement was made available to the press on January 11, 2022. Epidemic zones will be determined and control movement within 5 km radius around the infected site will be enforced. The World Animal Health Organization (OIE) will be officially notified of the positive detection. All dimensions of impact will be carefully considered to minimize the damage and adverse effects on the swine production industry and pig farmers. Farmers are requested not to panic. ASF only occurs in pigs and is not able to transmit to humans.

DLD reiterated that there has never been cover-up regarding ASF in pigs since 2018, when the first outbreak of ASF in pigs was discovered in China. The agency has closely monitored the situation and always been prepared to deal with the disease. All Provincial Livestock Offices are required to establish a center to perform surveillance and disease control operations. Rehearsals for a preparedness plan are conducted. A contingency plan and Clinical Practice Guideline for ASF in swine are in place and published on DLD website.

Integration of the work among relevant agencies in rigorous inspections of tourists and illegal smuggling of pigs and swine products from high-risk countries is conducted in order to prevent entry of AFS into Thailand. Exports are restricted to reduce the risk of contamination. Live pigs transport to deliver pigs into the countries with outbreaks is prohibited. Cross-border transfer trucks shall be used to transport pigs to the country of destination and must be sprayed with disinfectants. There will be cooperation with international organizations such as OIE.

Meetings to draw cooperation among neighboring countries (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) on disease prevention have been organized. Collaborative efforts with private sector were implemented in establishing disinfectant spraying plants in 5 stations at the animal quarantine checkpoints in Chiang Rai, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan and Sa Kaeo provinces. Public relations media is being prepared in various languages such as English, Lao, Burmese, Khmer, etc.

Sampling and analysis had been conducted by the National Institute of Animal Health for disease surveillance. Analytical results previously found were negative for ASF in all pigs. There have been shown to be positive for other diseases such as Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED), Classical Swine Fever (CSF), and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

For compensation, the disease does not have a specific vaccine and medication. If an epidemic is found in the country, it will be difficult to eradicate and causing serious economic losses. In the past, DLD has continuously carried out surveillance and preventive measures. One of the measures taken is mitigating the risk by destroying high-risk pigs to prevent disease progression. By virtue of the Animal Epidemic Act B.E. 2558, compensation can be arranged for farmers whose infected pigs are destroyed.

In the past, the compensation was allocated from the government annual expenditure budget and national emergency fund. Farmers were paid for the cost of the destroyed pigs 3 times, totaling 3,239 farmers, 112,752 pigs, amounting to 470,426,009 baht. In 2022, DLD has proposed and approved by the cabinet the budget for 4,941 farmers, 159,453 pigs, amounting to 574,111,262 baht to compensate for the cost of the destroyed pigs. DLD will expedite the payment to help pig farmers as soon as possible.

Increased pork prices derive from various factors. The pork prices went up starting in late 2021 until present. The number of live pigs converted to pork has been reduced. In addition, the cost of production of fattening pigs increased due to the increase in feed prices as well as the cost of establishing a biological protection system for pig farms. Transportation costs are also higher due to rising fuel prices. The main factor causing the decline in pig productivity is climate change contributing to increasing health problems in Thai pig farms

In 2021, there were outbreaks of PRRS, PED and CSF. Farmers decided to decrease pig density in the farms and stop raising pigs in high-risk areas for health. There were measures to resolve urgent, short-term and long-term problems. For urgent measures, the Central Committee on Price of Goods and Services of Ministry of Commerce (MOC) announced a ban on export of pigs for 3 months (6 January – 5 April 2022). MOC will manage feed prices and grant special loans.

Farmers are encouraged to restart farming through guaranteed appropriate selling prices in accordance with the actual costs incurred. A survey of pig production is expedited in order to identify target areas and determine necessary measures. Production capacity of sows for replacement must be increased. For short-term measures, maize production will be promoted to substitute imports. Sow production will be expanded. Research studies on drugs and immunomodulators to reduce losses from epidemics shall be conducted soonest.

For long-term measures, implementation of Good Farming Management (GFM) to prevent epidemics is encouraged. Improving farms applying disease prevention systems with lower costs when compared to GAP implementation is recommended. These efforts will help increase the amount of pig production to meet consumer demand. Low-interest loans from the Bank for Agriculture and Agriculture Cooperatives (BAAC) will be granted. It is expected that the swine price situation will gradually return to normal.

In order to be proactive in preventing disease in the long term, DLD appointed the Committee on Development and Promotion of ASF Research Studies in Swine. The Committee consists of government agencies, private sector, associations and academia from various Faculties of Veterinary Medicine and universities. The objective is to study and conduct researches on effective prevention and control of ASF in pigs in the future. ASF vaccine for swine must be quickly developed with highest efficiency. Research studies on ASF in pigs shall be continued. The vaccine is a method used to contain the disease only but not the best way to control the disease. Disease prevention by strengthening farm biosecurity to prevent disease from occurring in the farm is of utmost importance.

In order to recover the ASF-free status in pigs as specified by OIE in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (CHAPTER 15.1. INFECTION WITH AFRICAN SWINE FEVER VIRUS), the restoration can be made in the form of country free, zone free or compartment free, subject to the terms and conditions of OIE. Surveillance must be carried out for 3 years without ill pigs caused by ASF infection. Imported pork and pork products must comply with OIE requirements. There must be evidence on the absence of *Ornithodoros* ticks associated with infection and proof of disinfection taken place in the last infected house with the destruction of pigs. There must be sentinel pigs used for surveillance in the house where the results must be negative for ASF in the pigs.

Finally, MOAC asks for cooperation from farmers to strictly implement DLD's disease control measures in order to quickly keep the disease under control. Should any questions arise or unusual death or sickness in pigs is found or help is needed from DLD, please contact District or Provincial Livestock Development Offices in your area or call DLD hotline 063-225-688 or through the use of smart phone Application DLD 4.0 which available 24 hours a day.

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