News story: African swine fever risk reminder

Updated: Link to EFSA's practical video guide to African swine fever added.

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly contagious viral disease of pigs which is currently spreading in eastern and central Europe and has recently been found in China. The virus does not affect people but severe strains of the virus are often fatal to pigs of any age.

If the disease were to reach the UK it would have a devastating effect on our export market and would also mean the humane culling of pigs on infected premises to prevent further spread.

What you should do

If you keep pigs, you must not feed catering waste of any description, or domestic food waste, to your pigs. It is illegal to do so. This is because of the risk of spreading disease.

This includes food from vegetarian kitchens, as there is still a risk of cross contamination from products of animal origin such as milk.

This ban on feeding food waste also helps to protect the UK from diseases such as foot and mouth disease.

Don't feed:

- Food scraps and catering waste from any restaurant or commercial kitchen (including vegan kitchens) as this is illegal.
- Domestic kitchen waste or scraps.
- Raw, partially cooked or fully cooked meat and fish (including shellfish).
- Dog and cat food.

Instead feed:

- Specially formulated commercial pig feed as a safe and easy way to give your pigs a balanced diet.

- Fruit and vegetable material that has never entered a kitchen and which has not come into contact with material of animal origin.

If you are ever worried about the health of your pigs consult your veterinary surgeon immediately.

How the disease spreads

The biggest risk of the disease entering the UK's pig population is by pigs eating infected pork or pork products derived from infected pigs or wild boar. The ASF virus can survive for months in smoked, dried and cured meats, and in frozen meat. The greatest risk is from meat products brought into the UK from affected countries as personal imports since commercial trade of such products is not permitted from ASF restricted areas.

It also survives in pig faeces and in the blood of infected pigs or wild boar. The virus can therefore be spread on vehicles, equipment, clothing and boots contaminated by infected pigs or wild boar. As a result, farm staff whose homes are in ASF-affected areas in Europe, and people returning to the UK from holidays or hunting expeditions could unknowingly bring back infection. If these people also happen to keep pigs, or work on pig farms, they could pass that contamination on to their pigs and introduce disease, but there are some straightforward actions they can take to prevent introduction.

Practise good biosecurity

- Use dedicated clothing and boots for you and anyone coming onto your premises.
- Prevent vehicles or equipment from coming on to your premises unless cleaned and disinfected first.
- Ensure that people who look after or visit your pigs understand the disease risk of bringing back meat products and in particular wild boar meat or pork/pork products from affected countries. Trade of pork from affected areas in these countries is illegal.
- Don't bring meat products onto the farm to avoid accidental access to pigs.

Latest situation in Europe

African swine fever was first detected in EU Member States in 2014. Since then, the disease has been spreading in parts of eastern and central Europe. It has been reported in the Baltic States, Poland, Romania, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Ukraine and Russia. The presence of the disease in both commercial and backyard pigs in continental Europe means that there is an increased risk of introduction of African swine fever to pigs in the UK. It has also recently been detected in China. You can find out more in our assessments of the risk.

Further information

See more information about African swine fever and how to spot it and advice and posters to download from AHDB Pork.

If you suspect African swine fever you should notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency immediately.

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.

For information about biosecurity see controlling disease in farm animals.

For a practical guide on ASF, please see the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA's)
video.

EFSA's practical video guide

Corporate report: Customer Notice 2018-012: Waste Forecasting Submissions

LLW Repository Ltd publishes Customer Notices which provide key information and updates to Customers

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Press release: Native crayfish make a comeback in Lincolnshire

A threatened species of crayfish is making a comeback in Lincolnshire thanks to efforts by the Environment Agency and local conservation groups.

Last July, 600 white-clawed crayfish were moved from locations in the River Witham – where they're at risk of being wiped out by invasive signal crayfish – to new remote locations including a chalk stream in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

Now, surveys show the transfer – the first in the county – has been successful, and the crayfish have started to breed.

Native white-clawed crayfish have been in decline since non-native American signal crayfish escaped into UK waters in the 1970s. These larger, invasive crayfish outcompete native species for food and habitat and carry a disease fatal to the UK species.

But working with partners such as the Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project (LCSP) and the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency is seeking to secure their future by relocating them to areas free of the invaders in a

scheme known as the ‘ark project.’

Richard Chadd, senior environmental monitoring officer with the Environment Agency said:

> These crayfish are a vital part of our ecology, so preserving them is yet another example of how we’re protecting our environment for the future.
>
> Having personally worked on this project – physically picking up these crayfish, measuring them, checking their health and relocating them to their new homes – I’m thrilled that our efforts at protecting them have been so successful.
>
> Previously the crayfish were only present in two locations in the county, so we’ve potentially doubled their habitat in the space of a year – and Lincolnshire’s rare, protected chalk streams are the perfect home. They’re remote, clean, and the water is high in calcium, which helps crayfish form strong exoskeletons and makes them more robust.

Ruth Craig, Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project Officer, said:

> The Lincolnshire Chalk Streams Project jumped at the chance to support this EA-led initiative to establish native white-clawed crayfish sites in the chalk streams of the Lincolnshire Wolds.
>
> We offered up some potential sites and once they were all assessed, we were excited to hear one of the chalk streams had scored as highly suitable.
>
> We worked closely with local landowners to secure access and their long-term support in protecting the area from disturbance, and we will return to monitor the populations as needed. But the hard work doesn’t end here – we plan to continue identifying further possible locations, supporting the work of the EA.

White-clawed crayfish, named for the pale colour of the underside of their claws, are the country’s largest native freshwater crustaceans. Generally growing to 30 – 40mm in length, some can live up to 12 years and reach 120mm long from tip to tail.

Collectively, non-native invasive species cost the UK economy an estimated £1.7b every year.
Everyone can do their part to prevent the spread of invasive species and protect native ones by taking care to follow the biosecurity steps of thoroughly checking, cleaning and drying your clothes and equipment any time you’ve been in the water. You can get more information from the Non-native Species Secretariat.

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Press release: Happy dace for River Tyne fish survey

The Environment Agency joined forces with expert anglers for the second year running to carry out an important survey to assess the numbers of a highly prized fish in Northumberland.

Surveys for dace, the main species of coarse fish in the River Tyne, much valued by anglers, took place on the North Tyne tributary as part of a wider programme to monitor any impact of the revised releases of water from Kielder Reservoir.

Environment Agency specialists teamed up with 17 expert anglers from the Tyne Anglers Alliance and other fishing clubs – with anglers from as far afield as Yorkshire and the Scottish Borders making the trip – to fish around a dozen locations between Kielder and Watersmeet.

The aim was to both update and enhance our existing information on dace populations.

There were some great results – including a whopping 27lb catch at Wark and an 18lb bag from Redesmouth.

Good numbers of young dace

Environment Agency Fisheries Officer Niall Cook, who organised the survey, said:

> After such a successful event last year we are now looking to run this annually so we can build up a detailed picture of where dace can be found in the North Tyne and also where perhaps they aren't so abundant.
>
> The survey this year was particularly successful in that it showed good numbers of young dace in the middle reaches of the North Tyne. This contrasted with the 2017 survey when almost all dace caught were older fish.

Angling was used in preference to other survey methods like electric fishing and netting because dace are highly mobile and difficult to catch, especially in wide rivers like the North Tyne.

The Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water and the hydropower operator, Innogy Renewables UK Ltd worked together in 2016 to make changes to the operating arrangements for the release of water from Kielder Reservoir.

An annual trial concluded in October 2017 and the changes are intended to maintain the future of water supply to the North East, better reflect the natural changes in river flows, provide increased flood storage in the reservoir and increase the generation of clean, renewable energy.

Surveys provide information

Hydrologist Rachel Merrix, who led on the trial for the Environment Agency, added:

> Although the annual trial of the revised release regime ended last October we continue to monitor river flows and temperature to ensure that the environment is protected. Fish surveys such as this one provide us with additional information which increases our confidence that the revised releases are not having an adverse effect on native coarse fish.
>
> We have had some feedback from both reservoir and river users on the impact of the releases but would encourage others to let us know if they have any concerns.
>
> We continuously monitor river levels, flows and water temperatures at several locations in the Tyne catchment and all of this data is available on request.

Other activities to monitor the impact of the new Kielder release regime include temperature monitoring at 11 new sites, as well as electric fishing surveys for juvenile salmonoids and freshwater pearl mussel assessments.

For more information and updates on the trial visit the Kielder release website or email Kielder.reservoir@environment-agency.gov.uk with any queries

or observations.