

African Swine Fever Disease Control Strategy for Great Britain

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of document

- 1.1.1 This document outlines how an outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Great Britain (GB) would be managed.
- 1.1.2 There are similarities in the disease control approach for ASF and Classical Swine Fever (CSF). Therefore, this document has been developed to be read alongside the [Disease Control Strategy for Classical Swine Fever in GB](#).
- 1.1.3 Since ASF could spread throughout GB and would not naturally be halted by regional or political boundaries the approach to managing an ASF outbreak seeks complementary, consistent and coordinated measures in all regions. This control strategy was prepared in consultation with Defra, Scottish Government, and Welsh Assembly Government, delivery agents, veterinary profession, and organisations representing pig producers and processors.
- 1.1.4 We hope that by describing this framework all parties affected during an outbreak of ASF will be better placed to respond quickly and effectively to control the outbreak. Furthermore, this strategy should enable affected parties to prepare to mitigate the likely impact of these control measures during an ASF outbreak.

1.2 African Swine Fever

- 1.2.1 ASF is a highly contagious notifiable disease of pigs caused by a virus. The disease may occur in acute, sub-acute or chronic forms. The acute form causes severe disease from which the majority of affected pigs die. ASF does not infect people.
- 1.2.2 ASF is a notifiable disease. This means any suspicion or occurrence of swine fever must be notified to the authorities. ASF has never occurred in GB.
- 1.2.3 ASF can be spread through:
 - Direct contact with infected pigs, faeces or body fluids
 - Indirect contact via fomites such as equipment, vehicles or people who work with pigs between pig farms with ineffective biosecurity
 - Pigs eating infected pig meat or meat products
 - Biological vectors - ticks of the species *Ornithodoros*, although ASF-competent ticks are not present in the UK
- 1.2.4 Although ASF and CSF are caused by unrelated viruses, the clinical signs of both are very similar and the diseases can only be differentiated by laboratory diagnostic tests.
- 1.2.5 Information on the disease is readily available from many sources and some useful links are included here:
 - [Defra animal disease website](#)
 - [Welsh Assembly Government ASF web page](#)

- [Scottish Government ASF web page](#)
- [OIE disease summary](#)

2 Approach to disease control

2.1.1 Although African and Classical Swine Fever (ASF and CSF) are caused by unrelated viruses, the disease control approach for ASF is very similar to that for CSF. This is due to the fact that no treatment is available for either, and both diseases are spread in similar ways.

2.1.2 The general principles of disease control for ASF or CSF are:

- to have early detection, rapid reporting and diagnosis of swine fever to limit the extent of disease spread that can occur before disease controls are brought into force, thereby reducing the initial size of the outbreak and simplifying disease control
- to contain disease at premises where it is detected, and to eradicate it swiftly and effectively such that it cannot be re-introduced
- to limit the risk of any further spread of disease from premises connected with or in the vicinity of the infected premises
- To undertake risk assessments based on an epidemiological assessment before easing restrictions and to undertake surveillance for signs of further disease before lifting restrictions
- To comply with European Community (EC) obligations and Office International des Epizooties (OIE; the World Organisation for Animal Health) disease control codes

2.1.3 However, there are some differences between the ASF and CSF viruses, namely that:

- ASF generally has a longer incubation period of 5-15 days (compared to usually between five and ten days for CSF) and under field conditions ASF clinical symptoms may only become evident in a holding several weeks after virus introduction or even more if mild strains of the virus are involved
- ASF can be transmitted by soft tick vectors, although no ASF-competent ticks have been found in the UK
- Currently there is no vaccine available for ASF

2.1.4 An outbreak of ASF would therefore follow the principles set out in the CSF Disease Control Strategy except for the variations noted in the following section.

3 Comparison of the ASF and CSF Disease Control Strategies

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This document has been developed to be read alongside the [Control Strategy for Classical Swine Fever in GB](#). The CSF control strategy will apply to an outbreak of ASF except for the differences noted in this section.

3.1.2 The ASF disease control strategy complies with European law, such as EC Directive 2002/60/EC¹ for the control of ASF and OIE obligations².

3.2 Maintaining disease freedom and surveillance

3.2.1 The measures described in the CSF Control Strategy (Section 3) to prevent an incursion of CSF into the UK and to ensure any incursion would be detected quickly will be applicable to ASF.

3.3 Suspicion of disease in GB

3.3.1 A standard procedure applies when any exotic notifiable disease is suspected in GB. This process will be largely identical for ASF and CSF (see Section 4 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy).

3.4 Confirmation of the first case of ASF in GB

3.4.1 The same approach as described in Section 5 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy would apply.

3.5 Controls at infected premises (IP)

3.5.1 The following control measures described for a CSF-infected premises in Section 6 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy will be similar to those at an ASF-infected premises:

- movement and access controls on the IP
- slaughter of pigs
- destruction of pig semen, ova and embryos
- cleansing and disinfection
- tracing of dangerous contacts
- tracing of meat from animals slaughtered in risk period
- control measures at establishments
- control measures at animal gatherings
- compensation

3.5.2 Section 6.12 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy concerning repopulation of pig premises does not apply to ASF. The following points set out the controls that apply for repopulation of premises affected by ASF.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2002:192:0027:0046:EN:PDF>

² http://www.oie.int/eng/Normes/mcode/en_chapitre_1.15.1.htm#rubrique_pestes_porcines_africaines

3.5.3 Where the ASF infection at the premises has not been linked to vectors:

- Pigs may be reintroduced to the premises no sooner than 40 days after the satisfactory completion of secondary cleansing and disinfection (C&D).
- For open air holdings, the reintroduction of pigs will start with sentinel pigs that should have tested negative for ASF antibodies (or come from premises not subjected to restrictions because of ASF) and be re-tested (serology tested) 45 days after being placed on the premises. If the second tests prove negative, restrictions will be lifted and full repopulation may commence.
- For holdings where pigs are kept indoors, the reintroduction should start with sentinel pigs as above or total repopulation can take place provided that all pigs arrive within 20 days (and come from holdings not subjected to any restrictions related to ASF) and are serology tested for ASF at least 45 days after the last pigs arrived.

3.5.4 If more than six months have elapsed since the completion of necessary C&D, and the epidemiological evidence supports it, the premises may be repopulated without testing, subject to authorisation. However, since disease freedom requires full C&D of pig premises, it is unlikely any premises will be authorised to repopulate without completing C&D due to the countrywide implications for trade.

3.6 Measures when tick vectors are suspected or confirmed at an IP

3.6.1 ASF can be transmitted by soft tick vectors. Whilst it is considered unlikely that such ASF-competent ticks would be present in the UK³, if ASF is confirmed in GB, expert advice will be sought regarding the possibility of biological vectors (soft ticks) in the area or whether other mechanical transmission of infected blood could be involved in the epidemiology of the disease. If so, experts will assist in determining the appropriate control measures to be taken at infected premises.

3.6.2 EC law requires special measures to be applied if the presence of vectors⁴ was ever suspected or confirmed on an ASF-infected premises.

3.6.3 If the presence of vectors is suspected or possible on an infected premises, an inspection of the pigs' living and resting quarters and the surrounding area should be undertaken to establish the presence or absence of vectors (by physical inspection and the trapping of specimens if necessary).

3.6.4 If the presence of vectors is confirmed:

- The vectors will be tested to confirm or otherwise the presence of ASF
- Further monitoring, checking and control measures will be established in the holding and the surrounding area

³ Gale, P., Drew, T., Phillips, L.P., David, G. & Wooldridge, M. (2009) The effect of climate change on the occurrence and prevalence of livestock diseases in Great Britain: a review. J. Appl. Microbiol. 106: 1409-1423.

⁴ Council Directive 2002/60/EC defines a vector as a tick of the species *Ornithodoros erraticus*.

- The IP will be insecticide-treated in addition to cleansing and disinfection
- 3.6.5 The control of the tick vector can be very difficult due to its long life cycle, ability to survive long periods without feeding, the possibility of alternative hosts other than pigs and the possibility of hiding deeply in the fissures of the buildings where it is difficult to spray with insecticides.
- 3.6.6 In the case of premises where the occurrence of disease has been linked to vectors, restocking will not take place for at least 6 years unless:
- Specific measures have been carried out, under official supervision, to eliminate the vector from the premises and places where the pigs would be kept or come into contact with.
 - It has been possible to show that the persistence of vectors no longer represents a significant risk of ASF being transmitted.
- 3.6.7 Thereafter, the reintroduction of pigs will start with the introduction of sentinel pigs that should have tested negative for ASF antibodies (or come from premises not subjected to restrictions because of ASF) and be re-tested 45 days after being placed on the premises. If the second tests prove negative, restrictions will be lifted and full repopulation may commence. In addition, no pig may leave the holding in question after full repopulation until further serological tests for ASF have been carried out with negative results on samples collected from the pigs in the holding at the earliest 60 days after full repopulation.
- 3.6.8 Information on the implementation of the control measures above would be provided to the EC Standing Veterinary Committee⁵.

3.7 Measures in disease control zones

- 3.7.1 The ASF control zones and the measures in them are largely identical to those set out in Section 7 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy.
- 3.7.2 A key difference is that the EU law concerning the minimum periods for allowing movements of pigs are slightly longer for ASF due to the typically longer incubation period for ASF. This means that:
- No pigs may be moved off or onto a premises in the protection zone until at least 40 days after the preliminary C&D has been completed at the infected premises.
 - No pigs may be moved off or onto a premises in the surveillance zone until at least 30 days after the preliminary C&D has been completed at the infected premises.
 - For premises in control zones that wish to move pigs, an intensive sampling and testing programme could be undertaken. If the CVO determines that the

⁵ The EC Standing Committee on Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH). This may change under the Lisbon Treaty.

sampling and testing programme makes it possible to rule out the presence of ASF on the premises in question⁶, this movement prohibition may be reduced to 30 days in the protection zone (or 21 days in the surveillance zone). This option may be limited by logistics and available diagnostic resources.

3.8 Breeds at risk and other specialist pigs

3.8.1 As for CSF, EC law allows for a derogation from culling of breeds at risk or pigs bred for scientific, research, display or educational purposes (such as zoo or wildlife parks), provided that disease control is not jeopardised. Such exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will place obligations on the pig keeper to put in place specified mitigating measures to minimise any disease risks the exemption creates. See Section 8 of CSF Strategy for further information.

3.9 Pigs living in the wild

3.9.1 Wild boar and other feral pigs are susceptible to ASF and therefore could potentially have a role in disease spread. In the naive feral boar populations in England clinical disease and high mortality is likely. If ASF was suspected or confirmed in feral pigs in GB, the same disease control strategy as for CSF would apply in order to ensure that disease was stamped out quickly and to minimise the risk of spread from feral to domestic pigs. See Section 9 of the CSF Disease Control Strategy for further information.

3.10 Vaccination

3.10.1 There is currently no vaccine available for the control of ASF. Therefore the measures set out in Section 10 of the Classical Swine Fever Disease Control Strategy do not apply.

3.11 Gaining disease freedom

3.11.1 The same principles and approach for gaining disease freedom apply to both ASF and CSF (see Section 11 of CSF Strategy for further information). However, an important difference is that the EU law about minimum periods for removing zones are slightly longer for ASF than CSF due to the longer incubation period for ASF.

3.11.2 Protection zones will not be ended until:

- all necessary cleansing and disinfection (and if necessary disinsectisation) has been carried out at all infected premises in the zone to the satisfaction of a veterinary inspector
- pigs on all holdings have undergone clinical and laboratory examinations in order to detect the possible presence of ASF virus

⁶ This programme will as a minimum be that set out in the EU Diagnostic Manual for ASF <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:143:0035:01:EN:HTML>

- examinations in a protection zone should not take place until at least 45 days after the satisfactory completion of preliminary C&D on infected premises to which the zone relates
- this 45-day period may be reduced to 30 days if the relevant minister determines that an intensive sampling and testing programme has taken place to determine that ASF was not present on the premises in question⁷

3.11.3 Surveillance zones will not be ended until:

- all necessary cleansing and disinfection (and if necessary disinsectisation) has been carried out at all infected premises in the zone to the satisfaction of a veterinary inspector
- pigs on all holdings have undergone clinical and, where necessary, laboratory examinations in order to detect the possible presence of ASF virus
- examinations in a surveillance zone should not take place until at least 40 days after the satisfactory completion of preliminary C&D on infected premises to which the zone relates
- This 40-day period may be reduced to 20 days if the relevant minister determines that an intensive sampling and testing programme has taken place to determine that ASF was not present on the premises in question⁷.

⁷ This programme will as a minimum be that set out in the EU Diagnostic Manual for ASF <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2003:143:0035:01:EN:HTML>

4 Glossary/ Acronyms

AH – Animal Health

ASF – African Swine Fever

C&D – Cleansing and disinfection

CSF – Classical Swine Fever

CVO – Chief Veterinary Officer relevant to England, Scotland or Wales

EC/EU – European Community/ European Union

Feral pigs – free-ranging wild boar, feral domestic pigs or feral hybrid pigs

Fomites –any object or material capable of carrying infectious agents such as ASF virus. For example, vehicles, equipment, feed stuffs, clothing, footwear etc. May also include scavenging animals, vermin etc.

GB – Great Britain

IP – Infected premises

OIE – Office International des Epizooties (World Organisation for Animal Health)

Relevant Minister – Secretary of State, Scottish Ministers or Welsh Ministers