



African Swine Fever in Assam

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Why in News

The Centre has advised the Assam state government to go for culling of pigs affected by the **African Swine Fever** (ASF).

Key Points

- It has been advised to divide the affected areas into zones and go for culling accordingly.
- The disease was first reported in November-December, 2019 from the areas of China bordering Arunachal Pradesh.
- A few organised piggeries in Assam have been affected and the possible carrier could be humans. However, there is **no confirmation on humans being the carrier** of the virus.
- Earlier in April, there were reported deaths of pigs due to the **Classical Swine Fever** (CSF).
- ASF and CSF are different from **Swine Flu (H1N1)** and do not affect humans.
- **CSF can be prevented by proper vaccination** but there is **no vaccination for ASF**. Culling of the affected pigs is the only option.

African Swine Fever

- It is a **highly contagious** and **fatal animal disease** that infects and leads to an acute form of **hemorrhagic fever in domestic and wild pigs**.
- It was **first detected in Africa** in the **1920s**.
- The **mortality** is close to **100%** and since the fever has no cure, the only way to stop its spread is by culling the animals.
- ASF is **not a threat to human beings** since it only spreads from animals to other animals.
- ASF is a disease listed in the **World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code** and thus, reported to the OIE.

African swine fever (ASF)

The virus is highly **resistant to low temperatures** and can survive for extended periods of time in the blood, feces and tissue of infected animals.

ASF is a **highly contagious**, transboundary viral disease (*Asfarviridae* family; *Asfivirus* genus).

It can affect both domestic and wild pigs (wild boars and peccaries). **It is harmless to humans.**

According to the OIE, **24%** of its member countries (48 out of 200) **have reported the disease** as present since 2016.

Typical clinical signs of ASF are similar to those of classical swine fever (which is endemic in several countries of the Americas); therefore, a **laboratory test** is required to distinguish them.

The **peracute** form of the virus causes sudden death with few signs.

African swine fever can be transmitted through **direct contact** between sick and healthy animals. It can also be transmitted **indirectly** through feed containing meat from infected animals (the virus can remain infectious for 3 to 6 months in uncooked pork products); **biological vectors** such as ticks of the genus *Ornithodoros*; and contaminated **inanimate objects** (fomites) that can transmit the virus.

Global alarms went off in August 2018, when an ASF outbreak was first reported in **China**. The disease swept through the entire Asian country and spread to **Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Hong Kong**.

According to official data for this period, more than **2.5 million domestic pigs** have died or been killed—67.6% of them in Asia over the past 10 months.

Between 2016 and May 2019, there were a total of **10,211 outbreaks in Africa, Europe and Asia**.

World Organisation for Animal Health

- OIE is an **intergovernmental organisation** responsible for improving animal health worldwide.
- In 2018, it had a total of **182 Member Countries**. **India is one of the member** countries.
- OIE standards are **recognised by the World Trade Organization** as reference international sanitary rules.
- It is headquartered in **Paris, France**.

Source: TH