

Swill feeding

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What is swill feeding?

Swill feeding is the traditional name for the feeding of food scraps and other waste material to pigs. This practice has caused foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks overseas, including the catastrophic epidemic in the United Kingdom in 2001. Swill feeding, which was common in Australia in the 1950s, is now **banned** in all states, including New South Wales. Some food wastes have been categorised as 'prohibited substances', and it is against the law to feed them to pigs.

Which foods are prohibited substances?

You **must not** feed meat, meat products, or anything that has been in contact with meat to pigs. This includes:

- any meat product, including pies, sausage rolls, bacon and cheese rolls, pizza, deli meats, table scraps, etc.
- any carcass or part of a carcass of any mammal or bird, including meat, bones, blood, offal, hide and feathers (pigs that feed on carcasses are also at risk of contracting anthrax, which is contagious to humans)
- the excreta (droppings) of any mammal or bird
- household, commercial or industrial waste, including restaurant waste and discarded cooking oils
- anything that has been in contact with a prohibited substance, via collection, storage, or transport in contaminated containers (such as meat trays and take-away food containers).

These restrictions apply to all pigs, including pet pigs.

An exemption exists to allow the use of meat baits for the control of feral pigs, but only under permit and the supervision of NSW DPI or Rural Lands Protection Board rangers.

Are there any food wastes that are not prohibited substances?

Yes there are, provided they have not been in contact with meat products or stored in contaminated containers.

You can feed:

- milk
- eggs
- fish – preferably as meal, processed by commercial hot rendering and purchased from a reputable produce store or feed merchant
- tallow or gelatine
- manufactured dry dog or cat food
- dry meal made from meat, blood, bone or feathers, processed by commercial hot rendering and purchased from a reputable produce store or feed merchant
- Non-meat bakery waste
- Fruit, vegetable or cereal waste
- Vegetable oil or oilseed waste that has not been used for cooking.

NB: the feeding of food waste to pigs tends to be popular because it reduces feed costs; however, it is important to be sure that the food waste you are using is clean waste, and not contaminated with any chemical or pesticide residues. You should request a Feedstuff Vendor Declaration to comply with your QA system (Pig Pass QA or APIQ). An example of this vendor declaration can be found on the Australian pork website – <http://www.australianpork.com.au> – in the Pig Pass QA download page.



Why are some foods prohibited substances?

Foods such as imported meat and meat products can carry the viruses of animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and swine fever. These viruses can survive in meat even after it has been processed for human consumption. Humans are **not** affected, but the consequences for animals eating these products in swill are severe. There is no way of telling which products may be infected.

Australia has strict quarantine laws, but there is a small chance that infected food products could enter our country through illegal activities. This includes not declaring food products in your luggage when returning from overseas.

Illegally imported foods that appear fresh and fit for human consumption may be carrying the viruses that cause severe diseases in animals. There may not be any spoilage or smell from the foods to indicate that they are potentially dangerous to animals.

You would **not** know that these foods are carrying a deadly infection.

The Australian Government has estimated that the cost of a foot-and-mouth disease epidemic in Australia could easily reach \$13 billion. The impact would be felt across the community, not just in the rural sector. Consequently, we cannot allow **any** meat products to be fed to pigs – including products produced in Australia.

The risk to our economy is too great.

Why are the regulations so strict?

Australia has invested heavily to remain free from many major livestock diseases.

We need to protect this disease-free status, because it improves animal health and welfare, and gives our produce a 'clean and green' advantage in the world marketplace.

Income from exports of our primary produce (such as beef, sheep meat, goat meat, pork and dairy products) underpins Australia's economy. We also rely on the local production of top-quality pig and poultry products for domestic consumption.

If exotic diseases are introduced to Australia, there will be far-reaching and devastating effects, including:

- the loss of agricultural export markets and national income
- shortages of some animal products during and following an outbreak
- large-scale animal health and welfare issues, which may be ongoing

- devastating financial and emotional effects on rural communities, with flow-on effects to other industries and the economy generally.

Foot-and-mouth disease is not the only serious livestock disease that could be introduced to Australia through the feeding of prohibited substances to pigs. Other serious diseases that can be introduced by swill feeding include:

- swine vesicular disease
- African swine fever
- classical swine fever
- trichinellosis.

What can I do?

Pig owners

Do not feed any prohibited substances to your pigs. That cheap feed you are considering could be the start of a disaster. Get a Feedstuff Vendor Declaration from the feed supplier for all feed given to your pigs.

Foot-and-mouth disease virus can spread in the wind for over 10 km from a farm where there are infected pigs. The pigs may not even look sick, and they can spread disease without leaving the farm.

Remember – this includes pigs kept as pets!

People involved in the food industry

Please give thought to where your waste material is going. If food types in the waste are mixed when collected, it should not be fed to livestock.

Be prepared to supply a Feedstuff Vendor Declaration, now required by pig owners to comply with NSW Food Authority requirements in the marketplace.

You could pass on a copy of this Primefact to the people who collect your waste.

Councils/rural landholders

Feral animals can spread disease, too. Ensure that rubbish dumps and tip sites are securely fenced, in order to prevent access by feral pigs.

The general community

Please recognise the value of agricultural industries to our national economy.

Do not bring food or animal products into Australia without declaring them to customs officers.

Report any feeding of prohibited materials to pigs to your local Rural Lands Protection Board or NSW DPI office.

What is the penalty for feeding prohibited materials to pigs?

The NSW Government treats the feeding of prohibited materials to pigs as a very serious offence, carrying a penalty of up to \$11 000.

Need more information?

Rural Lands Protection Boards are able to advise you on what is acceptable to feed to your pigs, and can also provide general health and management advice for all livestock.

NSW DPI livestock officers and veterinarians are also available to give advice on feeding, health and management of all livestock species.

Look, check, ask a vet!

If you see something unusual in your livestock, please report it, so a veterinarian can investigate.

The national Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline number is **1800 675 888**.

It is staffed 24 hours a day. The hotline should be used by veterinarians and members of the public to report suspected cases of emergency diseases. It should not be used for routine animal health inquiries; direct these to your private veterinarian, Rural Lands Protection Board or NSW DPI veterinarian.

The restrictions on what can be fed to pigs are detailed in section 20FB of the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*, and section 60 of the *Stock Diseases Regulation 2004*.

You can view these at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/about/legislation>

Related Primefacts

[Dangers in feeding waste material to livestock \(Primefact 311\)](#)

[Buying stock feeds – minimising chemical residue risks \(Primefact 315\)](#)

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (July 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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