

A newsletter for pork producers



PigBytes

Issue 44 May 2020

In this issue

Covid-19 advice	1
Biosecurity on small scale farms	1
Understanding Pig Health and Biosecurity in NSW	1
NSW African swine fever (ASF) preparedness program	2
A farmer's perspective for an EAD response	3
Reducing workforce impact from COVID19	5
Bits and pieces	7

Covid-19 advice

NSW DPI – from the website

NSW Department of Primary Industries has established a COVID-19 Primary Industries Liaison Team to help primary producers navigate the challenges and impacts of COVID-19 on their business and industry.

You can contact the Primary Industries Liaison Team by emailing covidinfo@dpi.nsw.gov.au to discuss your individual business or industry circumstances.

NSW DPI Covid-19 information page

There are also 2 apps available for download from the [Australian Government Department of Health](#).

The [COVID safe app](#) speeds up contacting people exposed to coronavirus (COVID 19).

The [Coronavirus Australia app](#) provides official information and advice about the coronavirus (COVID 19) situation.

Biosecurity on small scale farms

Rachel Gordon

Biosecurity, in its simplest form, is risk management. What risk are we managing? The chance of unwanted diseases, pests, or weeds

entering your property, establishing, and spreading.

From a food safety perspective, it also is about preventing contaminants entering the food chain.

Biosecurity protects your business through preventing an outbreak of disease, or a pest or weed incursion, on your farm. And, if one of these things does break through your biosecurity, it protects your business (and your neighbours, community, and industry) by containing that incursion.

The added bonus of a comprehensive, written biosecurity plan is, if you need to be taken off farm for any prolonged length of time (hospital stay, needing to support family or friends elsewhere), someone else can look at your plan and run your business as you would.

There are various biosecurity plan templates out there. A good place to start is on the Farm Biosecurity webpage:
<https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/>

Here you will find a lot of information and templates regarding farm biosecurity, including specifically for pigs and pig farming.

For biosecurity to be effective on your farm or in your business it must be practical for your business and become part of your routine.

A robust biosecurity plan is a plan that is tailored to your business. You don't have to achieve everything overnight. Even small changes can reduce your biosecurity risk. Use of a biosecurity template ensures you are aware of biosecurity risks and any regulations that apply.

Understanding Pig Health and Biosecurity in NSW

NSW DPI – from the website

The [NSW Pig Health and Biosecurity project](#), undertaken in partnership with Charles Sturt University, is investigating ways to work with pig

owners and producers to develop and refine their landholder biosecurity plans.

We would like to learn about your understanding of biosecurity and what is important to you. We would like to hear about your challenges with biosecurity and any suggestions you might have.

This 3-staged project, to be carried out throughout 2020 will include:

- An online survey – Whether you have a pet pig, a Christmas pig, or a rescue pig; or are hobby farmer, small holder, semi-commercial or commercial producer [you are invited to complete the survey](#). Survey closes May 20, 2020. All responses are anonymous. No personally identifiable information is collected, and all responses will be presented in an aggregated form.
- Targeted education and training opportunities – survey findings will be used to develop targeted education and training opportunities.
- Follow-up online survey – project review and reporting for ongoing implementation and expansion to other industry sectors.

Please help us help you and take [the survey](#).

NSW African swine fever (ASF) preparedness program

Eliz Bradden ASF Program Leader

The NSW Animal Biosecurity team is leading a preparedness program to ensure government and industry can protect NSW from an ASF incursion in domestic or feral pigs. Several other teams across the Department and Local Land Services are actively involved in preparedness activities.

Regular updates and collaboration with industry representatives such as Australian Pork Limited and NSW Farmers Pork group are occurring frequently to ensure sharing of information, learnings and communications.

An essential focus of the preparedness in NSW is ensuring that all stakeholders who own or are somehow associated with pigs are aware of the risks and are doing their bit to protect our pig population. An example of just some of the stakeholders can be found in Figure 1.

In NSW, we have been engaging with these stakeholders and tailoring the messages needed

specifically for them. That includes training our veterinarians, government staff and industry about the disease and how to recognise it, ways that ASF could enter Australia, and what biosecurity measures can be implemented to prevent ASF in pigs.

We are working directly with pig owners to ensure they have the tools to protect their pigs. These activities include farm biosecurity planning advice, regular media materials about ASF and the current situation and undertaking prohibited pig feed inspections. We have communicated with overseas visitors, whether they be university students, itinerant workers or tourists, to advise them of the risks of bringing in pork products from other countries. Food outlets and waste facilities are being contacted about the responsible disposal of food waste to ensure that 'people food does not become pig food'.

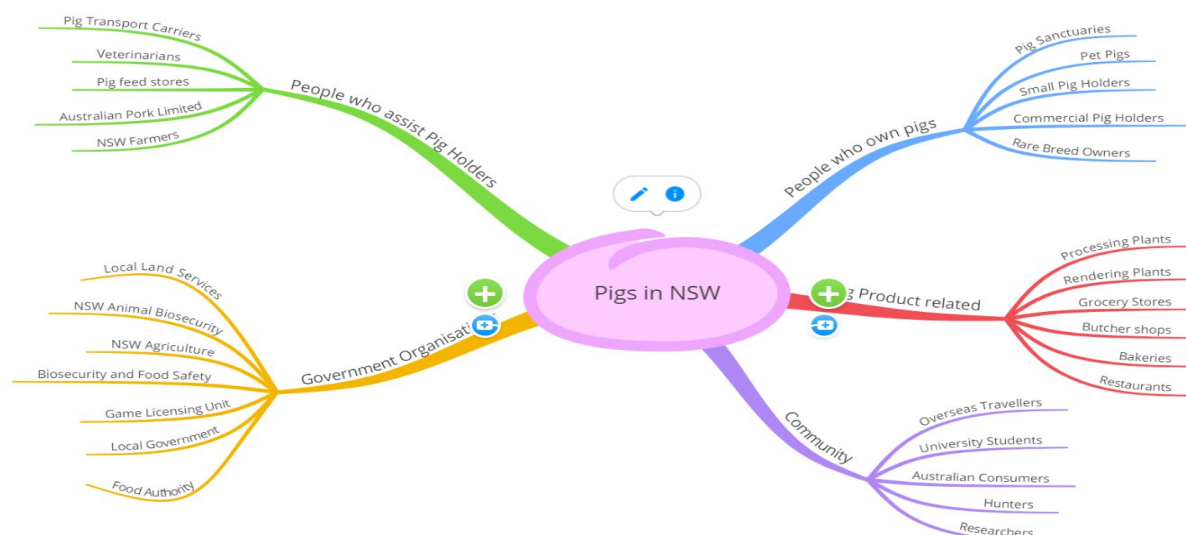
Behind the scenes, the NSW Animal Biosecurity team is preparing for a disease response by ensuring that response procedures are developed and tested with pig producers, industry bodies and other state governments. That includes determining how NSW would respond to a confirmed infection in the state or in another state by liaising with industry and the other states and territories.

Just a few things going on are:

- Ensuring the legal instruments are in line with the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015
- Reviewing AUSVETPLAN and developing the structure to implement this response plan
- Developing and testing surveillance and tracing plans
- Determining guidelines around movements for pigs or pig products in the event of an outbreak
- Working with industry, producers and EPA on how to manage the destruction of pigs on an infected farm
- Working nationally to determine strategies for feral pigs

While the threat of African Swine Fever is high, we are fortunate that it has not yet reached our shores. We have a unique opportunity to prepare everyone with the ultimate aim of preventing it ever entering Australia, or in the worst case, being ready to respond as rapidly as possible.

Figure 1: Stakeholders identified as having a connection to pigs or the pig industry in NSW.



Source: Eliz Bradden

A farmer's perspective for an EAD response

Eliz Bradden and Jayce Morgan

Emergency disease situations are fluid events meaning that things can change quickly.

There is some certainty in how a response to an EAD would unfold but there is no certainty to how the disease situation would unfold. For example, how many farms will be impacted; what level of connection they will have; and will it be across state borders?

When an EAD situation is declared, many things happen simultaneously. This checklist focuses on the farm perspective. Full details of a response to ASF are contained in AUSVETPLAN on the Animal Health Australia website.

What would happen if I suspect my pigs have African Swine Fever?

1. You report the suspicion of something serious on farm to the farm vet or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline 1800 675 888 ensuring there is a rapid response to investigate.

Prompt reporting limits the spread of the EAD and allows faster return to normal business operation for uninfected properties and businesses.

2. Your farm becomes a Suspect Premises (SP). A field veterinary team will arrive to sample

dead or sick pigs for laboratory confirmation of African Swine Fever.

3. Your farm will be placed under a legal order ('quarantine') until the disease is accurately identified.

Measures will include no pig movements in or out, heightened biosecurity measures for staff and vehicles – hygiene orientated – clean clothes, boots and vehicles.

You will be asked for farm plans, pig health and pig movement records for traceback.

4. Once there is confirmation of disease (usually within 24 hours), the suspect status (SP) becomes an infected premises (IP) status. The testing time is related to when the samples arrive at the laboratory, so in some cases this will be longer due to travel times.

All stock movements off the farm are restricted and tracing of all pig, pig product and people movements within last 30 days minimum begins.

Many farm records will be evaluated - mortality, history of clinical signs on the farm, all (pigs, people, feed) movements - to determine when and how the ASF virus entered the farm.

This is critical to determining the risk period and potential exposure of other farms.

5. A restricted area (RA) will be declared around the Infected premises (IP) for a radius of about 3 km.

Other farms within the RA will become Dangerous Contact Premises (DCP) if they have a strong connection to the infected farm, Trace Premises (TP) or At-Risk Premises (ARP) if there is only a low risk connection.

For example, a DCP may have moved pigs between an IP and the DCP while a Trace Premises may just share feed trucks. An ARP may have pigs but no other connection.

6. A control area (CA) will also be declared – this may be relatively local (10km radius) or if confirmation of disease suggests a lot of properties are either infected, or likely to be, the CA may include the whole state or country until tracing and surveillance is completed and the disease situation is better understood.

Farms in the CA with links to the infected farm will be given an appropriate status based on their situation – Dangerous Contact, Suspect or Trace premises.

7. Once the restricted area (RA) and control area (CA) have been established, intensive surveillance will begin on all at risk properties (properties with pigs) and feral pig populations.

The definition for surveillance is “A systematic program of investigation designed to establish the presence, extent or absence of a disease, or of infection or contamination with the causative organism. It includes the examination of animals for clinical signs, antibodies or the causative organism.”

For ASF, surveillance includes collection of farm data (species, presence/absence of disease, movement information) as well as veterinary testing for any DCP, TP or SP properties to determine the true disease status on these properties.

8. The policy for ASF is to stamp out the disease. This means pigs on infected premises will be humanely euthanised.

The farm will undergo DDD – destruction, disposal and decontamination – to remove the viral load and reduce the risk of spread to other pig populations.

Depending on the number of properties found to be infected at the outset of an outbreak, movement

restrictions will be either quite localised or potentially widespread.

To continue regular movements of pigs, a permit system will be in place to assess the risk of each requested movement before it will be allowed.

Movements within a Restricted Area will be very strict as this is a known disease area; similarly, the Control Area will also have heightened restrictions depending on the direction of the movement proposed.

FAQ: If my farm is in a Restricted area (RA), will my pigs be automatically destroyed?

No. Pigs will only be destroyed if

- the farm they live on is an Infected Premises confirmed by laboratory testing - OR
- the likelihood of them becoming infected is extreme – they are a Dangerous Contact Premises.

In AUSVETPLAN, a Dangerous Contact Premises (DCP) is “a premises apart from an abattoir, knackery or milk processing plant (or other such facility), that, after investigation and based on a risk assessment, is considered to contain susceptible animal(s) not showing clinical signs, but considered highly likely to contain an infected animal(s) and/or contaminated animal products, wastes or things that present an unacceptable risk to the response if the risk is not addressed, and that therefore requires action to address the risk.”

However, wherever possible, surveillance and monitoring would determine any further action.

If the farm has

- no trace connections to the IP, and
- has sound biosecurity supported by a QA program

it is unlikely the pigs would become infected.

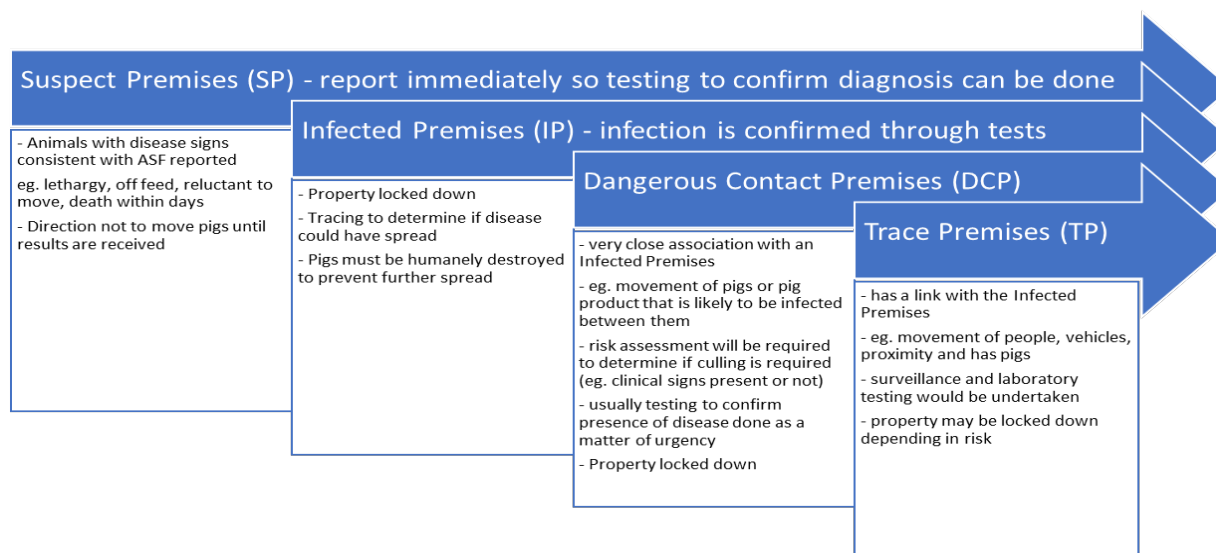
However, the farm would be in quarantine and under surveillance for an extended period. Planning for such a situation is recommended if you are in close proximity to other pig farms.

What references can I use to prepare my farm for an EAD outbreak?

- [AUSVETPLAN Manuals and Documents](#); Section 4 Enterprise manuals Pigs – see from page 51 for contingency planning
- [Preparing your business to survive and EAD – 30 Minute Piggery Plan](#)
- [The National Farm Biosecurity Manual for Pork Production](#)

- [Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance \(APIQ\) Manuals and Guides](#)

Figure 2: Diagram representation of the different premises classifications – suspect premises (SP), Infected premises (IP), Dangerous contact premises (DCP) and Trace Premises (TP) – and likely sequence of events.



Source: Eliz Bradden

Reducing workforce impact from COVID19

Sara Willis

How do I practice social distancing in a piggery operation?

- Limit the number of people who come to work to essential personnel only.
- Aim to maintain 1.5m separation in the working environment. Do a simple risk analysis of where you may have workers within 1.5m or within enclosed rooms and apply additional worker protection.
- Consider different staffing schedules to limit the number of team members present at one time.
- Stagger arrival of team members to the farm so they do not congregate in communal areas.
- Plan break times so that the lunch room space provides at least four-square-meters per person. Remove excess chairs from lunchrooms and space apart.
- Restrict the number of face-to-face meetings.
- Remember to limit travel to essential locations (i.e. supermarket, chemist).

What additional practices should be in place?

- Ensure all workers and contractors understand the risks and the additional procedures the business is taking.
- Wash your hands often and properly with soap and water, or use alcohol-based rub.
- Place hand sanitiser dispensers in areas where handwashing facilities are not practical, particularly at entrances and exits.
- Include posters at all hand washing stations as a reminder of the effective hand washing technique [Handwashing-12-step- poster-guide](#).
- Try to avoid touching your face with your hands.
- Consider temperature checks of workers (note commercial infra-red laser thermometers may need to be calibrated for human skin).
- Clean high traffic areas such as lunch rooms, showers and the office frequently.
- Regularly clean and disinfect high contact surfaces and frequently used equipment e.g. rails, handles, vaccine guns, pregnancy testers, feed scoops, etc. [Cleaning-and-disinfection-recommendations](#).

- Document the additional procedures that you have introduced and monitor the compliance.

What do I do if an employee is ill?

- Ensure your staff know the symptoms of COVID-19, download a [COVID-19 symptoms](#)
- Inform workers who are sick with respiratory illness that they must stay home.
- If someone becomes ill with respiratory symptoms at work, isolate them from other team members.
- Arrange for persons who are unwell to be sent home and access medical assistance.
- If a worker is confirmed to have COVID-19, call 13HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for advice. Inform co-workers about possible exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19 but maintain confidentiality.
- Advise staff members to seek immediate medical advice if they develop symptoms or are concerned about their health.
- Keep detailed records of who has worked where, when and with whom, so that you can quickly identify who may or may not have had close contact with a potentially infected staff member.
- Refer to WorkSafe Queensland website for more information [WorkSafe Queensland](#).
- For NSW visit [SafeWork NSW](#)
- For Victoria visit [WorkSafe Victoria](#)
- For South Australia visit [SafeWork SA](#)

How do I manage service providers to my farm?

- Make sure you have an up-to-date biosecurity management plan. If you don't have a plan, a template is available from [Animal Health Australia](#)
- Postpone all non-essential visits
- For a business-critical activity, conduct a risk assessment before allowing the provider onto the farm area. Critical health questions to ask are:
 - Have they had any contact with infected or quarantined people?
 - Are they well and have no cold or flu-like symptoms?
 - Are their family members, house sharers, work contacts well and have no cold or flu-like symptoms?

- Do they agree to meet social distancing and hygiene measures at all times while on site?
- Have they read and understood the businesses biosecurity plan?
- Ensure a biosecurity declaration is filled out for all personnel entering property.
- To avoid face to face contact, ensure a contact number is displayed on the biosecurity sign at the entrance to the property or the main office if off site, [Approved biosecurity sign](#).
- More Resources and signs are available at [Farm Biosecurity Pigs](#)

What contingency plans should I make?

- Consider the feed ingredients, medications and cleaning agents you have on hand and how you will access and provide if there is an interruption in availability.
- Plan for how you will continue to operate if your workforce is significantly reduced through actual infections, or as a result of staff being in isolation due to contact with an infected person (14 days away from the farm or office).
- Consider how you might be able to find and train replacement staff. Plan for how you can recruit people from other sectors that are out of work.
- As a single operator, consider how you would care for your stock if you are unable to meet their daily needs.

What assistance is available?

The Australian Government's JobKeeper package ([JobKeeper guides](#) and [JobKeeper eligibility](#)) offers a subsidy of up to \$1500 per fortnight per employee to keep eligible businesses paying their staff. Employers and sole traders can register their interest in this program with the [Australian Tax Office](#).

Boosting cash flow: Temporary cash flow support to small and medium businesses through two sets of cash flow boosts to support employers to retain employees. Support will be provided via tax-free cash flow boosts of between \$20,000 and \$100,000.

Coronavirus SME Guarantee Scheme: The Australian Government will provide a guarantee of 50% to support short-term loans.

Supporting apprentices and trainees: Eligible employers can apply for a wage subsidy of 50% of their apprentice's or trainee's wage paid during 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020.

Job support loans: Loan for Queensland businesses to retain employees and maintain their operations. Low interest loans of up to \$250,000 are available to assist with carry-on expenses such as employee wages, rent and rates and other related expenditure. Eligible business types include sole traders, partnerships, private and public companies and trusts.

Payroll tax relief package: If you're an employer (or part of a group of employers) who pays \$6.5 million or less in Australian [taxable wages](#), you may be eligible for a refund of your payroll tax for 2 months, payroll tax holiday (i.e. no payroll tax to be paid) for 3 months, or a deferral of payroll tax for the 2020 calendar year.

Temporary relief for financially distressed businesses: The Australian Government is temporarily increasing the threshold at which creditors can issue a statutory demand.

SME power bill relief: Small and medium businesses may be eligible for \$500 rebate off their energy bill.

Where can I find more information?

Stay up-to-date with accurate information by visiting [health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19](#) or call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require interpreting services, call 131 450.

Australian Government Coronavirus (COVID 19) latest information – includes links to states' information

Safe Work Australia resources

Australian Taxation Office resources

Bits and pieces

From the internet....

Latest news from Europe on Covid 19 and Pigs

In early April, a leading disease research centre in Germany, the Freidrich-Loeffler-Institut (FLI) reported on work done on susceptibility of some farm animals to the Covid 19 coronavirus.

Whether this new virus can infect other animal species is being studied by a number of research institutes across the world.

The team at FLI found that under experimental conditions, neither pigs nor chickens were found to

be susceptible to infection with the virus. **The announcement from the FLI** said "according to the current state of knowledge, they are not affected by the virus and therefore do not pose a potential risk to human health.

A broader study at FLI of other species is ongoing, with final results expected in May.

Don't forget your Flu shot

Reminders for flu shots are very important this year to reduce the complications that would arise if you contracted influenza on top of Covid 19, this flu season. Don't forget the protection you also provide to your pig herd.

Influenza A spread from humans to pigs can cause serious disease in pigs, from both respiratory disease and with severe cases of abortions in sick sows; another reason to keep people away from your pigs and make sure both you and your staff get vaccinated for seasonal influenza.

Hand washing for disease prevention is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Recently [The Guardian](#) carried a story on the history of handwashing – a history that only stretches over 130 odd years.

Today it is recognised as one of the most 'simple-yet-significant' actions that everyone can take to stop the spread of disease both within humans and within agriculture.

As recently as 2009 handwashing compliance was described as worryingly low. Research published in the American Journal of Infection Control revealed that among university students "After urinating, 69% of women washed their hands, and only 43% of men.... After defecation 84% of women and 78% of men washed their hands. And before eating – a critical time to wash your hands – 10% of men and 7% of women washed their hands." Sobering statistics.

In 2009 Australia implemented the [National Hand Hygiene Initiative \(NHHI\)](#). The Hand Hygiene (HH) program was based on the World Health Organisation's 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene, and included educational materials and a regular audit system of HH compliance.

The NHHI was focussed on hospitals and healthcare workers. Even here with current knowledge compliance can be improved. In 2010 "the overall national HH compliance rate in 521 hospitals was 68.3%".

You will be pleased to know that the NHHI did result in “widespread sustained improvements.”

However, these 2 examples suggest we can all be more diligent with our hand washing. Hands should be clean before using hand sanitisers as any dirt or organic matter that is present will reduce the effectiveness of the sanitiser.

Wash dirty hands with soap and water and dry with a towel before using hand sanitiser.

NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) Pig Industry Group

Jayce Morgan
Development Officer Pigs.....02 6763 1257

Alex Russell
Manager
Intensive Livestock Industries02 6881 1212

Agriculture Victoria

Dr Regina Fogarty Principal Veterinary Officer
Pigs..... 0429 49 35 20

Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF)

Sara Willis
Principal Extension Officer.....07 4529 4214

PigBytes is a newsletter from the pig industry team at NSW DPI, Queensland DAF and Agriculture Victoria.

Editor: Jayce Morgan
jayce.morgan@dpi.nsw.gov.au

To subscribe to an email version of this newsletter email the editor or subscribe on the website.

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/newsletters/pigbytes>

ISSN 1836-974X

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development 2020. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the NSW Department of Primary Industries as the owner.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (May 2020). 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 the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

Your email address will be collected NSW Department Primary Industries and recorded for the purpose of providing an email newsletter service for you. This information will not be distributed to any other parties. The supply of your email address is voluntary. However, the email newsletter service cannot be effected without storage of this information on our databases. You may update or unsubscribe from these services at any time by sending an email to the editor shown above.

Published by the Department of Primary Industries.

Reference number PUB 20/278