

Swill feeding

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Animal Biosecurity, NSW Department of Primary Industries

What is swill feeding?

Swill feeding is the traditional name for the feeding of food scraps to pigs.

Prohibited pig feed ('swill') includes meat, meat products and anything that has come into contact with meat or meat products.

It is illegal to feed swill to pigs in all Australian states and territories. This includes allowing or directing another person to feed swill to pigs, or allowing pigs to have access to swill.

What food substances are considered swill?

You must not feed the following to pigs:

- Meat pies, sausage rolls, bacon and cheese rolls, pizza, deli meats, table scraps that contain or have been in contact with meat or meat products
- Household, commercial or industrial waste, including restaurant food and discarded cooking oils
- Anything that has been in contact with swill 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.

Are there any food substances that are not considered swill?

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

You can feed the following to pigs:

- Milk, milk products and milk by-products either of Australian origin or legally imported into Australia for stock feed use
- Eggs
- Dry meal made from meat, blood or bone processed by commercial hot rendering and purchased from a reputable produce store or feed merchant
- Non-meat bakery food substances
- Fruit, vegetables and cereals

Note: the feeding of discarded or downgraded food substances to pigs tends to be popular because it reduces food costs. However, it's important to make sure that the food substances you are feeding to your pigs are 'clean' and not contaminated with any antibiotic or pesticide residues.

Why all the fuss over swill feeding?

Pigs are considered 'high risk' for the introduction of exotic viral diseases (not present in Australia) through the illegal feeding of swill to pigs.

Swill feeding has caused foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks overseas, including the catastrophic epidemic in the United Kingdom in 2001.

FMD has been identified as the single greatest threat of any disease to Australian livestock industries. An outbreak of FMD in Australia would have devastating socio-economic impacts. The feeding of swill to pigs provides the most likely opportunity for the FMD virus to become established in Australia. Illegally imported meat products account for most of the FMD risk materials that might enter Australia.

The introduction of other exotic viral diseases to Australia, including African swine fever, classical swine fever and swine vesicular disease could also have an economic impact on the Australian pig industry. All three diseases are regularly transmitted in other parts of the world as a result of feeding infected swill to pigs.

Are you in the food business?

There are laws controlling the collection, storage, treatment and disposal of food substances in Australia. Significant penalties apply for people convicted of supplying and/or feeding swill to pigs.

If you are involved in a food business (e.g. café, restaurant, fast food outlet, hotel, hospital) that produces food waste, or you are involved in the handling, transporting and disposal of food waste you need to know what food substances are permitted to be supplied to livestock owners (especially pig owners) for the purpose of feeding to their animals.

How do I report swill feeding to authorities?

Under NSW legislation, the feeding of swill to pigs is considered a biosecurity event. This means that the owner or person in charge of pigs who is aware of swill feeding, or a person such as a veterinarian who in their professional capacity becomes aware of swill feeding, has a biosecurity duty to immediately notify an authorised officer.

You can notify by phoning:

- your [Local Land Services](#) on 1300 795 299; or
- a [NSW Department of Primary Industries](#) veterinarian or regulatory officer; or
- the animal biosecurity emergency hotline on 1800 675 888.

More information

- [Recognising exotic diseases of pigs](#) primefact
- [The general biosecurity duty and pig producers](#) primefact

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