

African Swine Fever - No Hazard to Humans

BfR Communication 036/2021 of November 19, 2021

On the evening of November 15, 2021, the National Reference Laboratory for African Swine Fever of the Friedrich Loeffler Institute (FLI) confirmed an outbreak of African swine fever (ASF) in a fattening pig farm in the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. ASF does not pose a health risk to humans. The ASF pathogen cannot be transmitted to humans. Neither direct contact with sick animals nor the consumption of food that comes from infected domestic pigs or wild boar poses a risk to human health. On September 10, 2020, the ASF virus was detected for the first time in Germany in a wild boar in the federal state of Brandenburg. On July 15, 2021, the ASF virus was detected in domestic pigs for the first time in Germany on two farms in Brandenburg. The virus continues to spread in Germany. The distinction between wild and domestic pigs is irrelevant for human health; the ASF virus remains harmless to humans in both cases.

The ASF pathogen is a virus that infects wild and domestic pigs and which leads to a serious, often fatal disease of the animals. It is transmitted through direct contact, excretions from infected animals or ticks. The ASF virus is native to infected wild animals in Africa. Outbreaks also occur again and again in southern Europe. The pathogen has been spreading from Georgia via Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to the northwest since 2007. ASF cases in wild boars and outbreaks in domestic pigs have been registered in the Baltic States since 2014. The virus has also been detected in Romania, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. In September 2018, the pathogen was also detected in wild boars in Belgium and thus for the first time in Western Europe.

The pathogen is very stable and can remain infectious in food for several months. If unheated food or unheated food leftovers, originating from infected animals, are fed to uninfected animals, the virus can be spread to previously ASF-free regions and thus also to domestic pig populations.

Although the ASF virus poses neither a health hazard nor a health risk for humans, the BfR advises that domestic pig and wild boar meat, like any other raw meat, should always be prepared hygienically as it may contain other pathogens. It should be kept refrigerated and prepared separately from other foods before cooking. The BfR recommends that a temperature of 70 degrees Celsius or higher should be maintained for at least two minutes when heating meat.

Further information on African swine fever (ASF) is available on the BfR website

Frequently Asked Questions on ASF: <https://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/349/frequently-asked-questions-about-african-swine-fever.pdf>



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