

Hygiene practices can help curb the spread of ASF

The recent outbreak of African swine flu (ASF) in the Western Cape is a reminder that the food supply chain is under constant threat of disease or contamination along the agricultural value chain.



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ASF poses no risk to humans, but any meat or products from affected swine can be a source of infection for other pigs. The virus can be spread through contact with raw pig carcasses. Carcasses must be disposed of effectively through burial or incineration at an isolated location. It is also transmitted through contact with contaminated people, vehicles, equipment, or shoes.



Flare-up of ASF with more than 100 new cases worldwide

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"Strict biosecurity and farm management protocols could help minimise the spread of the disease and enhance the health and productivity of pigs," says Emma Corder, managing director of Industroclean, a supplier of industrial cleaning equipment to the agricultural sector.

"To avoid cross-contamination, all farm staff and visitors' hands and boots should be disinfected regularly before entering the piggery. Equipment used in pens should be cleaned and disinfected before and after use," adds Corder.

According to Corder, cleaning equipment designed to work well in a farm environment such as industrial cleaners and sweepers is always recommended. "They are powerful, robust, and manoeuvrable and can effectively clean and remove contagious particles that are often spread by the movement of workers or equipment on site."

Points of infection of ASF

There are multiple points at which infection or contamination can be introduced unless stringent hygiene standards are

maintained. Management, routine cleaning and disinfection, general housekeeping and even the piggery design can impact standard hygiene.



Campaign initiated following African swine fever outbreak

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Floor-type and maintenance can impact the pigs' health and hygiene conditions in the pen. Fully and partly slatted pens are best. Fully slatted pits should be drained at least twice a day and solid floor pens should be fitted with a separate drain. The area where the swine are kept must have a washable surface. A high-pressure washer can be used to clean this area of the piggery thoroughly.

Regularly inspect the pen floors, walls, and ceilings to ensure they are free from cracks so that cleaning and disinfection can be more effective. Trough design should prevent pigs from walking, lying, or urinating in it and in this case trough feeding is better than floor feeding.

Ways to keep pig environments hygienic and **minimise the risk of contamination** include:

- Limit staff movement and encourage staff to stay on the farm for a full shift.
- Wash hands before and after entering the piggery.
- At the entrance of the piggery, use footbaths with disinfectant and change the fluid daily.
- Limit access and reduce visits to only those by essential visitors like vets who, upon arrival, should wash their hands, change their clothes, and wear protective shoes.
- All delivery vehicles should be disinfected after each trip, focussing on the vehicle's ramp and wheels.
- Dry-clean and remove all organic matter from pens before disinfection as disinfectants could adversely react with organic matter.
- Hose down floors, walls, and ceilings.
- Apply detergent, ensuring sufficient contact time as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Rinse all surfaces, followed by applying a disinfectant.

- Feeding troughs should be cleaned routinely and be drained, thoroughly cleaned, and disinfected at least weekly.

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