

Feral pigs and swill feeding – why it's dangerous

- Feral pigs can contract diseases that are not present in Australia by eating uncooked food scraps, food waste that contains imported meat or anything that has been in contact with meat. This is known as swill feeding.
- Swill feeding of pigs, both feral and domestic, poses the greatest risk of introducing diseases including foot and mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever, classical swine fever and transmissible gastroenteritis into Australia.
- The feeding of swill (also called prohibited pig feed) is illegal in all states and territories of Australia
- The swill feeding ban applies to all types of pigs, including feral pigs.
- If an exotic livestock disease was to enter into Australia, the impacts would be devastating. Export markets will close immediately and would likely result in the slaughter of infected and susceptible livestock.

Risks from swill feeding

Meat and mammalian material from overseas countries, including imported dairy products, can contain viruses that are not found in Australian livestock.

Banning the feeding of prohibited food waste to pigs provides an important defence against the introduction of FMD and other serious livestock diseases into Australia.

History

- 2001 – The FMD outbreak in the UK is thought to have started when pigs were fed food waste containing illegally imported meat products contaminated with the FMD virus.
- The spread of African swine fever throughout Europe, Russia and parts of Asia is believed to have been caused by pigs accessing food waste.
- 2018 – Feeding swill to wild pigs is believed to have caused the outbreak of African swine fever in Belgium.
- 2018 – China estimates that 62% of the African swine fever outbreaks since August 2018 have been caused by swill feeding of contaminated products to pigs.

Feral pigs and swill feeding

To reduce the risk of an exotic disease getting to the feral pig population, steps should be made to reduce the exposure of feral pigs to swill, including:

- Improving the understanding of what swill is, and its risks, by the general community.
- When baiting or trapping feral pigs, only acceptable pig feed should be used to free feed and bait.
- Restrict access/exclude feral pigs from offal pits, refuse and rubbish tips.
- Dispose of dead animals appropriately (if possible).
- Improving waste management practices by landholders, councils and stakeholders who utilise environments where feral pigs may live.
- When visiting areas where feral pigs may be present, take all rubbish and leftover food away.

Swill (or prohibited pig feed) includes:

- Pies, sausage rolls, bacon and cheese rolls
- Pizza
- Deli meats
- Table scraps that contain meat or meat products
- Carcass and material derived from a mammal (including meat, blood, faeces)
- Household, commercial or industrial waste, including restaurant food and discarded cooking oils
- Milk and milk products that are not of Australian origin (unless imported as feed for livestock)
- 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)
- Poultry and material derived from poultry (including meat, eggs, blood, faeces (Queensland only))

Acceptable Pig Feed:

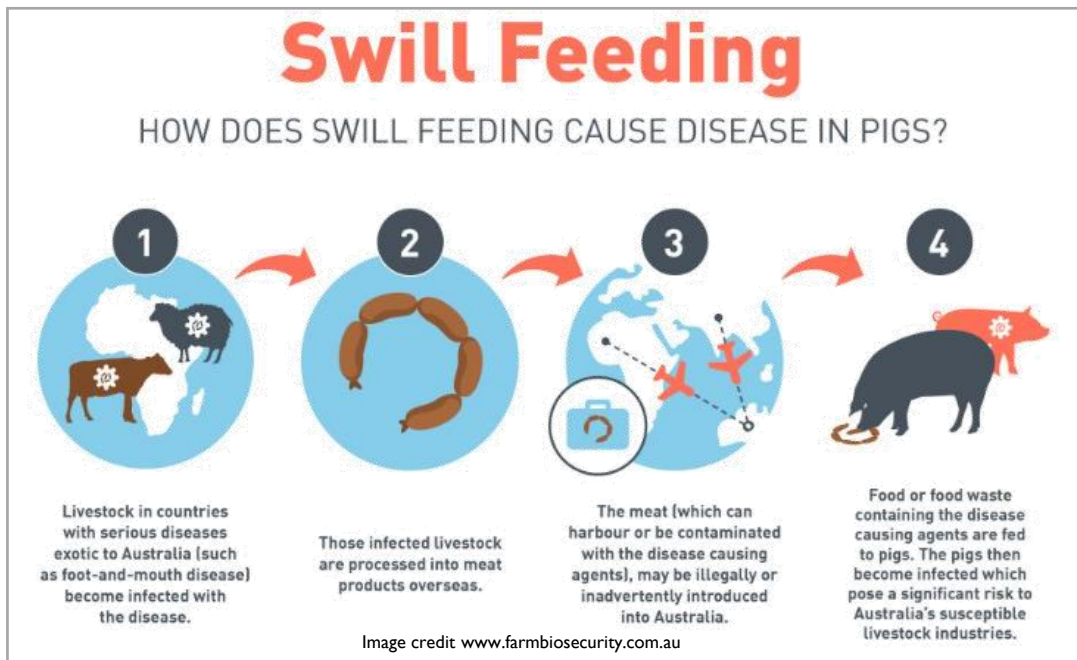
- Milk or milk products that are of Australian origin or have been legally imported for stock-feed use in Australia
- Fruit and vegetables
- Grains and cereals
- Rendered animal fat and treated cooking oils (must comply with state and territory legislation)
- Eggs (illegal in Queensland)
- Other feed that has been approved in writing by the relevant authority within the State or Territory Government.
- Feeds that have been prepared under a quality assurance program such as FeedSafe®. For a list of FeedSafe® accredited feed suppliers see the Stock Feed Manufacturers Council of Australia (SFMCA) website: www.sfmca.com.au

If you notice any unusual clinical signs in your pigs that you think could be an emergency animal disease, report it immediately to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1 800 675 888 or to your local veterinarian.

If you suspect pigs are being fed swill/Prohibited Pig Feed, call your State DPI or the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1 800 675 888.

Strong penalties apply if you are caught doing any of the following:

1. Feeding Prohibited Pig Feed to pigs
2. Allowing pigs to access Prohibited Pig Feed
3. Storing Prohibited Pig Feed at a place where one or more pigs are kept
4. Collecting and or supplying Prohibited Pig Feed to be fed to pigs.
5. Penalties may extend to anyone who is aware that pigs are being fed Prohibited Pig Feed.



- **Australia has strict quarantine and biosecurity measures to prevent the importation of animal products from countries where these diseases are known to occur.**
- **However, there is still the risk that infected products may be brought into Australia.**
- **This is why it is vital that pigs are only fed approved pig feeds.**

Further information

- Farm Biosecurity website: <http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/livestock/pigs/feeding-your-pigs/>
- Animal Health Australia: <https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/prohibited-pig-feed-compliance-and-awareness/>

State relevant links:

- ACT Ph: 132 281 <https://www.environment.act.gov.au/parks-conservation/plants-and-animals/Biosecurity/animal-health/pigs>
- NSW DPI - Ph: 1800 680 244 <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/pigs/pig-nutrition/swill-feeding>
- NT DITT - Ph: (08) 8999 5511 https://industry.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/233572/602.pdf
- QLD DAF - Ph: 13 25 23 <https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industries/farms-fishing-forestry/agriculture/livestock/pigs/swill-laws>
- SA PIRSA - Ph: (08) 8226 0995 http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/pigs/swill_feed
- TAS NRE - Ph: (03) 6336 5306 <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/animal-biosecurity/animal-health/pigs/swill-feeding>
- VIC AgVic - Ph: 136 186 <https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/pigs/compliance/feeding-prohibited-pig-feed>
- WA DPIRD - Ph: (08) 9368 3333 <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-biosecurity/pig-feed-why-it-illegal-feed-food-scraps-swill-pigs>

Information on swill feeding published by Australian Pork Limited, Animal Health Australia and each state or territory's DPI was considered in the development of this factsheet.