

Seoul: North Korea confirms African swine fever outbreak

May 31 2019, by Kim Tong-Hyung



In this April 29, 2009, file photo, a South Korean farmer sprays disinfectant against a possible swine flu outbreak at a port farm in Paju, South Korea. South Korea is scrambling to prevent the spread of the highly contagious African swine fever on its pig herds after North Korea confirmed an outbreak at a farm near its border with China. (AP Photo/Yonhap, Lee Jung-hoon, File)

South Korea said Friday that it is scrambling to prevent the spread of the highly contagious African swine fever on its pig industry after North Korea confirmed an outbreak at a farm near its border with China.

South Korea's agriculture ministry said North Korea reported to the World Organization for Animal Health that 77 of the 99 [pigs](#) at a farm in Jagang province died of the disease and another 22 pigs were culled.

The outbreak in North Korea comes after the disease in past months ravaged farms in China, where more than a million pigs have been reportedly culled, and also spread to Vietnam, Cambodia and Mongolia.

The disease is harmless to humans but for pigs is fatal and highly contagious, and there is no known cure or vaccine.

North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper on Friday published three different articles detailing the spread of the African swine fever across Asia, but none of them mentioned that the disease has reached the North.

Oh Soon-min, director of quarantine policies at South Korea's agriculture ministry, said quarantine measures and blood tests will be stepped up in some 350 pig farms near the inter-Korean border. Fences and traps will also be installed near the farms to prevent the pigs from contacting [wild boars](#) that roam in and out of North Korea.



In this Dec. 18, 2009, file photo, South Korean trucks transporting the Influenza medicine Tamiflu and Relenza get ready to leave for North Korean city of Kaesong as South Korean Army soldiers stand at customs, immigration and quarantine office in Paju, near the border village of the Panmunjom (DMZ) that separates the two Koreas since the Korean War, South Korea. South Korea is scrambling to prevent the spread of the highly contagious African swine fever on its pig herds after North Korea confirmed an outbreak at a farm near its border with China. The banner read "Support materials to cure North Korea's swine flu." (AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon, File)

"While North Korea's Jagang province, where the outbreak of the African swine fever was confirmed, is near the border between North Korea and China, we do believe this is a serious situation as there is a possibility that the disease can spread toward the South," Oh said.

He said the South Korean government believes the North raises about 2.6 million pigs in 14 government-run or cooperative farms.

The South hopes to discuss the issue with North Korea at an inter-Korean liaison office and find ways to help the North fight the spread, said Eugene Lee, a spokeswoman from Seoul's Unification Ministry, which deals with inter-Korean affairs.

The outbreak comes as the North has significantly slowed its engagement with South Korea following the collapse of a February summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Lee said the South had told the North "several times" that it could help in case of African swine fever outbreak, but did not confirm how North Korean officials responded.

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