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Arkansas Department of Agriculture Issues Reminder about Importance of Biosecurity Measures Against African Swine Fever

LITTLE ROCK, AR – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory has confirmed African Swine Fever in samples collected from pigs in the Dominican Republic. This is the first detection of African Swine Fever in the western hemisphere since 1978.

“This detection should serve as an important reminder to everyone involved in the swine industry or who has contact with swine in any way to enhance their surveillance and biosecurity measures against this highly contagious and deadly viral disease affecting both domestic and feral swine,” said Wes Ward, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture. “While African Swine Fever is not a human health threat or a food safety issue, an outbreak in the United States would be devastating to the swine industry in Arkansas and across the country.”

As of December 1, 2020, USDA estimated that Arkansas had 126,000 hogs and pigs with a production value of \$40.3 million. The most recent USDA Census of Agriculture reports that Arkansas had 1,021 farms with at least one hog or pig.

International travelers should also be aware of African Swine Fever to avoid unknowingly carrying the disease into the United States. Travelers should follow all USDA guidelines regarding bringing back agriculture items or souvenirs, reporting contact with pigs or swine farms while on travel, and disinfecting protocols prior to contact with pigs in the United States. More information for international travelers can be found at <https://bit.ly/3BOlvtL>.

Because there is no treatment or vaccine available for African Swine Fever, the only way to stop the disease is to depopulate all affected or exposed swine herds.

Good on-farm biosecurity is crucial to preventing African Swine Fever and other animal diseases from developing and spreading. Each farm should have a biosecurity manager and a strict biosecurity plan that includes the following:

- Adhere to strict biosecurity measures following international travel and ask visitors about recent international travel.
- Wear site-specific boots and coveralls and keep them onsite. Provide disposable coveralls for visitors.
- Keep detailed records of all people, vehicles, and equipment at the farm.
- Isolate sick animals from the herd and keep them away from visitors.
- Isolate all animals entering or re-entering the herd.
- Do not allow human food brought onsite to enter animal areas.
- Do not feed garbage to animals, to include carcasses, meat products, meat by-products or food containing animal proteins.

- Prevent direct and indirect contact between animals in the herd and feral swine.

“Arkansas pork producers are encouraged to develop a Secure Pork Plan which can help maintain continuity of business,” says John G. Nilz, DVM, Acting State Veterinarian. Tools for development of a Secure Pork Plan are available at <http://www.securepork.org/>.

Anyone working with pigs should be aware of the following signs of African Swine Fever:

- High fever
- Decreased appetite and weakness
- Red, blotchy skin or skin lesions
- Diarrhea and vomiting
- Coughing and difficulty breathing

Any pigs with these signs should be reported to the Arkansas Department of Agriculture’s Livestock and Poultry Division at 501-225-1598 or email john.nilz@agriculture.arkansas.gov or patrick.fisk@agriculture.arkansas.gov. Anyone finding a sick or dead feral hog with no obvious injury or cause of death should also report it immediately.

A copy of the USDA Statement on Confirmation of African Swine Fever in the Dominican Republic and other important information about African Swine Fever is available at: agriculture.arkansas.gov/african-swine-fever-confirmed-in-dominican-republic/.

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation. Visit agriculture.arkansas.gov/. The Arkansas Department of Agriculture offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.