

## FAQ

# African swine fever in wild boar



African Swine Fever (ASF) meanwhile has become endemic in wild boar in the European Union in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, and the Czech Republic, and case numbers are high. The risk of introduction into the German wild boar population by humans via contaminated pork or pork products is very high.

**Please help us minimize the risk of introduction and detect a possible outbreak as soon as possible!**

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### What is African swine fever?

African swine fever (ASF) is a virus disease which only affects swine (domestic pigs and wild boar). In its main endemic area, i.e. African countries south of the Sahara and several Mediterranean countries, the disease can be transmitted by soft ticks, which however are of no importance in our latitudes. Based on the current state of knowledge, other arthropods do not play a significant role.

### What does the disease look like?

In European wild boar, the infection causes very severe, but unspecific general symptoms, such as fever, weakness, anorexia, movement disorders and respiratory problems. In addition, diarrhoea and haemorrhages (nosebleed, bloody diarrhoea, bleeding of the skin) may occur. Sometimes diseased animals will show a reduced tendency to escape or other symptoms such as slow movements and disorientation. The disease equally affects all age groups and sexes, and most affected animals die within little more than one week.

When opening the carcass, attention should be paid to enlarged, “bloody” lymph nodes, enlarged spleen, and punctiform or sheet-like hemorrhages of organs, skin or subcutis. Lungs and respiratory tract are often filled with foam.

Absence of these signs does not exclude swine fever! In the current situation, animals which are found dead should always be examined.

### How is the disease transmitted?

The disease can be transmitted directly between animals or by contaminated objects and food. Under unfavourable conditions, carelessly throwing away a

meat sandwich can be sufficient to introduce the disease. Transmission by blood is particularly efficient. A tiny droplet is sufficient to transmit the infection! Therefore, it is crucial that hunters strictly observe hygienic measures.

Other mammals and humans are not susceptible to the virus.

### How important are predators and carrion eaters (foxes, raccoon dogs, birds of prey, ravens, crows) and in particular wolves in spreading the disease?

There is no indication that predators and carrion eaters play an important role in the spread of ASF.

Although it cannot be excluded that predators and carrion eaters may serve as mechanical vectors (distribution of virus-contaminated carcass parts, contamination of fur/feathers), the virus does not replicate in or on these animals. The wolf is no exception. Although wolves cover longer distances than other predators, it is assumed that they do not carry any food with them and that they clean their contaminated fur. The virus does not survive passage through the intestinal tract.

### Increased awareness is required!

In Germany, the wild boar density is very high. Introduction of ASF would be disastrous. Please pay attention to increased numbers of dead animals and report dead wild boar to the Tierfund-Kataster under [https://www.tierfund-kataster.de/tfk/tfk\\_erfassung.php](https://www.tierfund-kataster.de/tfk/tfk_erfassung.php). The competent veterinary agency will then be informed automatically and can take further measures. It is important that samples are sent to the competent veterinary diagnostic agency. Dry blood swabs are sufficient for reliable diagnostics. If no other material is available, even a marrowbone

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can be used. The most suitable samples are blood and spleen samples, as they enable extensive diagnostics and virus characterization. The sample quality is of minor importance. Even decaying samples can still be investigated!

Be particularly cautious handling objects that were in contact with blood. This includes boots, cloths, carcass storage containers, knives and clothing.

Please be aware that trophies and wild boar products from affected areas may represent a risk.

### How is the disease controlled?

As neither vaccines nor treatment options are available, only biosafety and hygienic measures as well as population control measures can be applied to combat the disease. Early detection of an ASF case is of utmost importance. It is the only possibility to implement protection zones (core zone, risk area, buffer zone) at an early stage and thus prevent a spread of

the disease. In these zones, different control measures are taken depending on local and seasonal conditions, e.g. hunting ban in the core zone and intensified hunting in the risk area.

Control measures are adapted to the individual situation in the respective district and are reviewed constantly. All control measures must be in accordance with the German Swine Fever Regulation.

### How does intensified wild boar hunting help prevent introduction and spread of ASF?

The high wild boar density in Germany would provide a large reservoir for the spread and establishment of African swine fever. It is therefore desirable to reduce the population prior to introduction of the disease. However, in case of an outbreak, intensified hunting alone will not be sufficient to control the disease.

**Please help us minimize the risk of introduction and detect a possible outbreak as early as possible!**