

Preparing your business to survive an emergency animal disease outbreak

A 30-Minute Plan for Piggeries

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About this document

The likelihood of emergency animal diseases (EADs) such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF) and porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) is low but when outbreaks do occur, they have a serious impact on the Australian pork industry supply chain from farm to abattoir. An EAD could result in an immediate reduction in export markets and restrictions on livestock movements, and (in the case of an FMD outbreak) a national livestock 'standstill' for a period of time. Infected or at-risk properties may also require livestock to be culled to help stop the disease from spreading.

Would your business survive?

This planning tool will assist you to develop an EAD survival plan. Thirty minutes spent completing this plan could improve the resilience of your business if an EAD occurs. You may even discover some useful ideas for improving the every-day operation of your business. Four steps are provided below to help you develop a plan (note that a more detailed guide on risk management planning for an EAD is also available, see the reference section). Further resources to help your planning include industry biosecurity plans and AUSVETPLAN manuals (also listed in the reference section).

Step 1: Think about your business

An EAD could disrupt every aspect of your supply chain and have ongoing effects on the profitability of your business., It can also affect the people, organisations and businesses you depend on. Completing the table below will help you identify the areas in your business (e.g. products and inputs) that may be vulnerable.

What areas of your business and supply chain may be vulnerable?

Area	Examples
1. Key products and customers	<i>abattoir, retailers, further processors, buyers of compost, pigs for food consumption, breeding stock, semen sales</i>
2. Key inputs and suppliers	<i>breeding stock and semen, feed, bedding, veterinary supplies, fuel, staff, contractors, power and water providers</i>
3. Key support services and service providers	<i>veterinarians, consultants, agents, saleyards operators, pig amalgamators, transporters, mechanics, accountants, IT support, abattoirs and industry organisations</i>
4. Key regulators	<i>local council, Department of Primary Industries (DPI or equivalent), Environment Protection Authority (EPA)</i>

Step 2: Understand the risks

Following the detection and confirmation of an EAD, a range of movement restrictions will be implemented. These restrictions may be widespread (e.g. a national livestock standstill) or more localised in the form of declared or quarantine areas (called restricted and control areas) around infected and at-risk premises. A national livestock standstill is a publicly announced ban on all movement of susceptible animals, whether confirmed as diseased or not, and pork/pork producers. This type of standstill is declared by authorities to allow them to assess where the disease already is without the situation getting worse through continuing movements. It is a criminal offence to move stock and/or pork or pork products during a livestock standstill. In addition, governments may also recall all pork and pork products from regions and/or premises where an EAD has been suspected and/or confirmed.

Individual premises may also be placed in quarantine, preventing any movements of pigs, people and vehicles, in or out of the premises. The restrictions may affect a property's ability to sell or move livestock, products, feed and supplies. Visits by people and vehicles may be restricted or may require strict biosecurity protocols to be observed (e.g. use of personal protective equipment or vehicle wash downs). Depending on the type of disease and the response policy, livestock from affected or at-risk properties may also be subjected to humane culling operations. Compensation is payable according to the formula set out in the AUSVETPLAN Valuation and Compensation Manual¹, and enshrined in state legislation, or as agreed in the response plan that is approved by the National Management Group.² Depending on the disease, livestock may be vaccinated rather than culled. Ongoing disease control and eradication arrangements may constrain or restrict your business activities for days, weeks, months or even years.

What would the following mean for your business—would your business survive?

1. an outbreak of an EAD on your property requiring all of your livestock to be culled
2. a closure of export market access
3. a loss of income, staff and suppliers
4. movement restrictions on your livestock, products, fodder, vehicles and equipment. Can you manage holding two or three weeks' worth of production?
5. emergency disease control activities such as vaccination, diagnostic testing or culling, requiring your time, equipment and other resources

¹ <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/our-publications/ausvetplan-manuals-and-documents/>

² The National Management Group (NMG) is a group which will approve/not approve the invoking of Cost Sharing during an appropriate Emergency Animal Disease Response Plan. For more information, see the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement at <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/emergency-animal-disease/ead-response-agreement/>

6. increased workload (e.g. for livestock that cannot be moved, animal welfare requirements, meeting requirements to demonstrate ethically responsible behaviour towards staff, the environment and the local community)
7. Unwanted media attention and publicity, and possibly identification of your farm, business, family and employees.

Step 3: Identify actions to take

The tables below list actions you can take to address each of the risks described in Step 2. Many of the actions are simply good business improvement practices, regardless of the risk of an EAD outbreak.

Look through the list to identify actions that could potentially minimise the impact of an EAD on your business. The list may prompt you to think of other steps you could take and you should write these in the space provided.

Risk 1: Infection of livestock

The best way to minimise the impact of any disease is to avoid infection in the first place by practising good biosecurity (see the links to online industry biosecurity manuals at the end of this document). However, if the disease is present in your herd, the immediate goal will be to prevent further spread with the assistance of animal health authorities. Remember that you have a legal obligation to report suspicions of notifiable diseases³. This can be done by calling the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (ph. 1800 675 888), or contacting your local veterinarian or the nearest department of primary industries or agriculture. Early detection and reporting of disease is essential to minimise the impact of an EAD. Staff must also be made aware of the penalties imposed for not reporting suspicions of an EAD.

Pig production businesses participating in the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ[✓]®,) already follow principles of good biosecurity as a requirement of certification. These are described in the APIQ[✓]®, Standards Manual. The APIQ[✓]®, requirements for biosecurity are also described in the 'Australian Pork Industry On Farm Biosecurity Manual', available from Animal Health Australia. ⁴If you are not APIQ[✓]® accredited, consider obtaining and following the AUSVETPLAN *Enterprise Manual for Piggeries*, the relevant part of the APIQ[✓]® Manual, or the Australian Pork Industry On Farm Biosecurity Manual. Otherwise, at the very minimum, consider the following actions:

³ A list of notifiable animal diseases is available at: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/pests-diseases-weeds/animal/notifiable>

⁴ <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National-Farm-Biosecurity-Manual-for-Pork-Production.pdf>

Actions for addressing Risk 1: Infection of livestock	Priority? Tick if yes.
Before an outbreak	
1. Train staff in disease recognition, biosecurity and hygiene, including procedures for reporting suspicions of notifiable disease (APIQ [✓] ® and Australian Pork Limited provide a range of online resources on for training and reference purposes). Develop systems that reward good biosecurity practice and make this part of the workplace culture. If there is ever any doubt whether an animal has a notifiable disease, immediately contact your veterinarian.	
2. Do not allow swill feeding, or meat products near your pigs. This practice presents a serious risk for the introduction of EADs and severe penalties apply. Swill is food or food waste that contains meat or meat products from mammals, or has come into contact with meat or meat products from mammals. For further information, see the APL website at http://australianpork.com.au/industry-focus/product-integrity/biosecurity/	
3. Chart trends in animal health and production data (such as rates of morbidity, mortality, farrowing rates, medicine usage, feed consumption and growth) to promote early detection of disease. Any significant deviations to normal rates of deaths for that category of pigs or stillbirths should be discussed with your vet.	
4. Adopt industry standards for biosecurity to protect both your herd and your business. Review farm biosecurity (around animal, people, fodder, vehicle movements and boundary fences) and consider getting the assistance of a veterinarian or biosecurity expert to develop, implement or upgrade biosecurity plans. Assess whether visitors present a risk and manage their contact with your animals.	
5. Train staff so they understand the farm biosecurity plan and follow best practice for hygiene measures.	
6. Ensure your biosecurity plan makes someone responsible for regular review and testing of the plan, and review of disease information.	
7. Record and keep displayed (and saved in staff phones) the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline number (1800 675 888) and the number of your local district or private veterinarian (or equivalent).	
8. Install maps of the property and surrounding areas.	
9. Display the Emergency Animal Disease Signs Poster – available at https://www.apiq.com.au/resources/resources-to-support-quality-assurance-and-good-agricultural-practice/	
10. Assess whether facilities to allow close inspection of pigs, such as hospital pens, are adequate	
11. Assess whether infrastructure and equipment for cleaning and disinfection of equipment, materials, vehicles and buildings are adequate or need improvement,	

and take action. Consult the AUSVETPLAN manual on decontamination for information on requirements for different diseases.	
12. Think about how you source and access disease information and consider upgrading internet access for faster download speeds, or subscribing to health news alerts on smart phones for early warning of disease outbreaks. In the event of an outbreak, the government will report information on www.outbreak.gov.au	
13. Bookmark the websites listed in the reference section at the end of this document so you can quickly access a whole suite of industry and AUSVETPLAN materials providing advice on biosecurity, individual animal diseases and on procedures for valuation and compensation, humane destruction and disposal, wild animal control, and decontamination.	
14. Establish and train staff to use effective quarantine (isolation) or hospital facilities on the farm for newly-arrived or sick pigs. All newly arrived pigs should be quarantined for at least six weeks.	
15. Segregate vehicle access areas from areas with livestock access, if possible.	
<u>During an outbreak</u>	
16. Check the website www.outbreak.gov.au for the latest official information.	
17. Ensure your contact information is up to date with government authorities and APL. APL will be the key organisation providing information to you prior to, and during an outbreak.	
18. Regularly update staff on disease control events and measures being taken on the farm.	

Risk 2: Overseas export market closures and the loss of income and staff
 EAD outbreaks often cause market closures, and the subsequent loss of income and staff impose severe financial hardship on piggery enterprises and related businesses (even those located a long distance from the outbreak). Actions taken to improve resilience taken before a period of financial hardship can mean the difference between whether your business survives or not.

Actions for addressing Risk 2: Market closures, loss of income and staff	Priority? Tick if yes.
<u>Before an outbreak</u>	
1. Think about your cash flow and investigate ways of accessing finance if an emergency did arise.	
2. Strengthen working relationships with your bank or other financial institutions, and accounting and legal firms, including making them aware that you have considered risk management planning processes, including those targeting EADs.	
3. Talk to your suppliers so they understand there could be a delay in payments if an emergency such as an EAD occurred. If possible, negotiate arrangements for payment during a business shock (such as that from a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak).	
4. Introduce labour-saving devices and technologies to improve business efficiency and your ability to cope with the additional livestock handling and decontamination requirements imposed by an EAD outbreak.	
5. Develop a multi-skilled, self-reliant workforce able to cope with stress and able to perform multiple roles in an emergency.	
6. Review staff contracts. Do the terms allow for additional hours in the case of an emergency? Do clauses restrict your ability to lay-off staff temporarily or in the event of exceptional circumstances?	
7. Develop a plan for orderly staff lay-offs and for re-employment once the outbreak ends and your business returns to normal.	
8. Maintain links with industry organisations, local community and neighbours as their support will be invaluable during an EAD outbreak.	
9. Review your property's insurance and lease agreements to determine the implications of an EAD outbreak for these.	
10. Know your neighbours, customers, suppliers, and suppliers of suppliers (so you can better predict the impact of an outbreak on these business stakeholders—which will in turn affect your business).	
<u>During an outbreak</u>	
11. Follow pre-arranged plans to mitigate economic loss.	
12. Keep good financial records relating to losses, additional costs etc.	

Risk 3: Movement restrictions and feed shortages

A major principle of eradicating an EAD is stopping the movements of people, animals and things that could spread the disease. Depending on proximity to the outbreak, farms may be placed under movement restrictions for months, making it very difficult to manage the supply of feed to livestock and to move animals and waste from the farm.

Actions for addressing Risk 3: Movement restrictions and feed shortages	Priority? Tick if yes.
<u>Before an outbreak</u>	
1. Make plans to deal with a backlog of pigs on your farm, including performing orderly disposal.	
2. Ensure there is capacity to store large quantities of manure, effluent and bedding, or to dispose of it, on your property.	
3. Consider options to deal with feed shortages (such as increasing storage and reserves through silos and silage) and identify options for obtaining feed locally.	
4. Record state and territory government livestock authority contact details so that you can promptly apply for permits to move livestock if a national livestock standstill is declared.	
5. Develop a plan for staying fully informed about movement restrictions during an EAD.	
6. Provide negotiation training for senior managers so they are better prepared for potentially difficult conversations with suppliers, customers, neighbours and other business stakeholders.	
7. Preserve valuable genetics, if scale permits, by setting up a reserve nucleus herd in a separate region.	
<u>During an outbreak</u>	
8. Consult your local DPI to obtain advice on the routine movement of product while minimising the spread of disease.	
9. Consult state authorities for advice on how to manage the essential movements of the herd between different sections of the property during a livestock standstill as restrictions may apply.	

Risk 4: Managing disease control activities

Eradication of an EAD requires cooperation with animal health authorities to conduct surveillance, tracing, vaccination, valuation, animal destruction, carcass disposal, pest control, cleaning and disinfection. The ability of your farm to comply and assist with these disease control activities during an EAD will have some influence on the time it will take to return to normal business—for you, the community and the industry.

Actions for addressing Risk 4: Managing disease control activities	Priority? Tick if yes.
Before an outbreak	
General	
1. Identify (in advance) a senior staff member to oversee any actions required by the veterinary team responding to an EAD.	
For surveillance, tracing and handling/vaccination	
2. Plan the provision of biosecurity facilities (e.g. wash-down sites) for staff and surveillance teams.	
3. Ensure facilities for inspecting, handling, testing and vaccinating animals are adequate.	
4. Provide staff training in low-stress animal handling.	
5. Ensure record keeping/information systems permit rapid retrieval and reporting of livestock health, movements and numbers, and include systems for sending data off-site without having to physically leave the property.	
6. Save the Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline number (1800 675 888) in your mobile phone.	
7. Ensure efficient traceability systems are in place.	
For valuation and compensation	
8. Keep good records of purchases, sales, age of stock and pregnancies.	
9. Ensure financial systems allow retrieval of relevant data.	
10. Take video footage or pictures of the premises, infrastructure, equipment, livestock, landscape and other assets to support valuation.	
For animal destruction and disposal	
11. Consider where burial, composting and/or incineration sites could be located on your property.	
12. Have a control plan for feral and scavenging animals.	
13. Implement best practice policies for workplace safety. For advice, refer to the transport and slaughter section of the <i>OHS Reference Guide Australian Meat Industry</i> . Advice and training resources for developing policy are also available from state and territory workplace safety bodies.	
For feral animal control	
14. Monitor and control feral animal populations. Make sure perimeter fences and gates are sound.	

15. Install rodent-proof feed storages.	
16. Manage dead pits to prevent scavenging.	
<i>For decontamination</i>	
17. Ensure cleanliness and tidiness of the premises to facilitate rapid decontamination.	
18. Consider where and how you could decontaminate heavy equipment (e.g. trucks) on your property. Ensure the layout and design of premises and wash-down sites are convenient and provide for rapid cleaning with minimal damage to infrastructure.	
19. Have reserve water storage capacity in place to meet the increased clean water requirements of decontamination.	
<u>During an outbreak</u>	
20. Ensure adequate supply and storage of clean water and disinfectant for decontamination requirements.	
21. Where possible, seal transport trucks to prevent leakage of manure or urine if animals are permitted to be transported.	

Risk 5: Managing your obligations and responsibilities

EADs cause severe disruption and hardship to farms and related businesses in many ways, all of which will attract intense public scrutiny. Support from other farmers, community organisations, government agencies and other groups become very important during and after the event. Failing to 'do the right thing' can cause difficulties for your business, even long after the outbreak is over.

Actions for addressing Risk 5: Managing your obligations and responsibilities	Priority? Tick if yes.
<u>Before an outbreak</u>	
1. Create a strong culture of best practice for humane slaughter, carcass disposal and stock handling.	
2. Ensure staff are aware of, and adhere to, codes of practice for animal welfare, especially sections relating to humane killing and animal handling	
<u>During an outbreak</u>	
3. Ensure staff cooperation with response teams.	
4. Work with industry organisations and support industry spokespeople by directing media to a central point to safeguard the reputation of your business and the industry.	
5. Manage staff stress and ensure workplace safety standards are maintained.	
6. Participate in community organisations such as the local fire brigade and state emergency services, or service organisations such as the CWA, Rotary and Red Cross, that provide emergency assistance to farmers and others.	
7. Ensure good working relationships with government animal health, environmental and work safety authorities and Industry Liaison Officers. Have them advise and assist the business to operate within the law.	
8. If practical, make staff available to assist other businesses with disease control activities.	

Step 4: Write down your action plan

Finally, in the table below, write down the actions you have identified as important, when they should be implemented, and who is responsible for them.

Your EAD survival plan

Action	Target date	Person responsible
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2.		
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16.		

Industry resources

- Australian Pork Industry Biosecurity resources <https://australianpork.com.au/industry-focus/biosecurity/>
- Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program Standards Manual: <https://www.apiq.com.au/standards/standards-manual>
- Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program **Small Holder** Manual
- Farm Biosecurity for Livestock Producers:
- Farm Biosecurity Website <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/>
- National Farm Biosecurity Manual for Pork Production <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National-Farm-Biosecurity-Manual-for-Pork-Production.pdf>
- Occupational Health and Safety Reference Guide Australian Meat Industry:
- <http://mintrac-whs.com.au/wp-content/uploads/OHS-Reference-Guide-Part4.pdf>

AUSVETPLAN Documents

- Disease specific documents, operational manuals, enterprise manuals and management manuals are all contained at <https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/our-publications/ausvetplan-manuals-and-documents/>
- Animal Health Australia (2011). Enterprise manual: Pig industry (Version 3.0)
- Operational Procedure Manuals
- Disease Strategies

**And remember, if you spot suspicious disease symptoms,
contact the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline:
1800 675 888**

