Farm Downtime Following Overseas Travel

Critical farm downtime periods and biosecurity measures for all individuals returning from overseas travel must be observed to prevent the exposure of Australian pigs to Emergency Animal Diseases (EADs). These diseases include, but are not limited to foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF), influenza, porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS), and porcine epidemic diarrhoea (PED).

Overseas travel presents a risk of direct or indirect contact with animals susceptible to EADs. Pathogens can be transferred mechanically on a person's clothing, footwear, and skin, as well as within their nasal passages.

Additionally, a traveller could be incubating an influenza virus upon return, becoming infectious to both people and pigs several days later. The principle of using layered interventions, such as personal decontamination and downtime periods, is critical to minimise the risk of a biosecurity breach.

While the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ✓®) requires a minimum downtime of 48 hours, a 7-day downtime is well-established and recommended to provide a higher level of assurance. This higher standard aligns with Australian government advice and European Union (EU) policy, offering broader protection against diseases that Australia remains free from.

ACTIONS PRIOR TO ENTRY TO A PIGGERY

- All people returning from overseas must shower thoroughly (including washing hair) and change into completely clean clothes and footwear before entering Australian premises where pigs are housed or handled.
- **Farm managers must consult their veterinarian before implementing a 48-hour minimum downtime for people returning from overseas (rather than the recommended 7 days).**
- Personal items and equipment that have been overseas (including mobile phones) must be cleaned and disinfected before returning to Australia and should not be taken into piggeries unless fully decontaminated and approved by management.
- **A minimum downtime of at least 7 days must be adhered to if a returning traveller has influenza-like symptoms. Depending on the day of onset of symptoms the 7-day downtime must be extended until symptoms have subsided, and the infectious period has passed.**

All biosecurity protocols for the premises you are entering should be observed.

These standards are widely implemented globally and are consistent with Australian Government advice, EU policy on FMD, and protection against influenza and other EADs. It supports a robust, layered biosecurity approach (the "Swiss cheese biosecurity model"[i]).

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SURVIVAL AND SPREAD OF SOME VIRUSES

Foot-and-mouth disease virus

The FMD virus can survive in human nasal cavities for up to 28 hours. Therefore, a downtime of at least 28 hours is necessary. This is conventionally rounded up to 48 hours for operational ease.

African swine fever virus

This virus can be spread through contaminated items such as clothing, footwear and equipment, including personal items. It does not typically harbour in human nasal passages. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of all personal items, in addition to showering and changing clothes, is essential.

Influenza virus

Influenza viruses that infect people may also infect pigs. Humans can incubate influenza viruses for up to 5 days or longer before showing symptoms, during which time they can be infectious to pigs. Simultaneous infection of pigs with multiple influenza strains can lead to the emergence of new virus strains. A 7-day downtime is considered appropriate to manage this risk. The 7 days should be extended if an individual shows clinical signs of influenza during this period. Further information about influenza viruses, including the role of people and biosecurity, can be found here.

MORE INFORMATION

Further information can be found in the National Farm Biosecurity for Pork Production Manual.
For technical information, contact the APL team at **extension@australianpork.com.au**