

Fact sheet for pig owners

Japanese encephalitis

Japanese encephalitis (JE) is a disease that can infect pigs, waterbirds and horses. JE is exotic to Australia but has recently been detected in pigs in southeast Australia, including South Australia.

About the virus

JEV is an arbovirus which means it is transmitted via bites from infected mosquitoes. La Niña weather conditions have made the weather wetter and warmer than normal, increasing mosquito activity.

Mosquito bites spread the virus

Mosquitoes become infected with the virus after feeding off an infected animal. Once infected, mosquitoes can spread the virus over long distances.

People can also become infected through mosquito bites. The virus does not spread from animals to animals, and it does not spread from animals to humans.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission of the virus.

Symptoms to look for in pigs

Common symptoms in pigs include:

- mummified, stillborn, abnormal, or weak piglets
- neurological signs in piglets including paddling, tremors or convulsions
- depression, wasting or hindlimb paralysis may be seen in sucklings and weaners
- boars may experience infertility, fluid retention (oedematous) and congested testicles.

Adult female pigs do not typically show other signs of disease.

How you can minimise the risk to your pigs

Control mosquitoes on your property

- eliminate mosquito breeding areas (e.g. stagnant water)
- pig producers should contact Australian Pork Limited (APL) for specific advice about using chemicals for mosquito control

Minimise pig exposure to mosquitos

- use mosquito repellent or netting
- cover animals or keep them indoors at a time of high mosquito activity (dawn, and dusk and overnight).

Treating the virus

There is currently no effective vaccine or treatment for animals. Effective management of mosquitoes on your property is key to preventing the spread of infection.

Reporting an animal suspected with the virus

Japanese encephalitis is an exotic a notifiable exotic disease in South Australia.

If you suspect Japanese encephalitis in pigs within South Australia, report it immediately on the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.