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trading standards law explained

Classical swine fever

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England

Classical swine fever (CSF) is a highly contagious viral disease of pigs. In its acute form, the disease generally results in high morbidity and mortality.

It causes damage to blood vessels throughout the body. This results in widespread haemorrhages, which may be seen in live pigs as blotching and discolouration of the skin, particularly of the extremities. There are several different strains of classical swine fever.

What is the possible impact of the disease?

CSF, if left unchecked, could cause severe economic losses to the industry, which may have an impact on rural society. An outbreak of disease would result in severe restrictions on the movement of animals and the export of live pigs and pig products. From a welfare perspective, severe forms of the disease cause

significant animal suffering.

Clinical signs

Affected pigs may show any of a wide range of clinical signs, reflecting the fact that the virus affects most organs and systems.

Examples of clinical signs shown by pigs:

- Sudden death without previous signs of ill-health
- Refusal to feed and loss of appetite
- Dull and reluctant to move
- High fever
- Blotching with reddening or purplish discolouration of the skin
- Swollen eyes and discharge
- Increased huddling together
- Constipation or diarrhoea
- Coughing and laboured breathing
- Vomiting
- Unsteady gait (they may walk with a swaying movement of the hindquarters, show obvious lack of coordination or walk in circles)
- Convulsions
- The birth of weak or trembling piglets

The herd is likely to suffer an increase in breeding problems such as reduced litter size, abortions, the birth of mummified or stillborn piglets, or congenital tremor. Mortality is ultimately likely to increase, particularly with pre-weaning piglets.

Pigs infected with mild strains may not become ill or show clinical signs.

Severe strains of the disease are generally fatal.

Classical swine fever is a notifiable disease. If you suspect CSF, you must tell the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) immediately by telephoning 0300 020 0301. Failure to do so is an offence.

Sources of transmission

- Feeding pigs with CSF-infected pork meat or products
- Direct contact between healthy pigs and pigs carrying CSF
- Direct contact of a healthy pig with:
    - Infected faeces or saliva
    - Contaminated pens, vehicles or clothing

What happens if disease is confirmed?

The premises where disease is confirmed will be referred to as the infected premises; it will be put under restriction so no animals, carcases, equipment or any other thing can move on or off except under the authority of a licence issued by a veterinary inspector. An approved disinfectant must be used to disinfect footwear, clothing and vehicles before entering or leaving the premises. Restrictions on spreading pig manure and slurry will also apply.

The keeper must keep accurate records to show the number and type of pigs on the premises since restrictions were imposed, together with the number that:

- Are alive
- Show clinical signs of illness
- Have died
- Have been born

These records must be kept for six months after the restrictions have been lifted.

A protection zone of 3 km and a surveillance zone of 10 km around the infected premises where the disease has been confirmed are put in place. There are certain restrictions for keepers of pigs that are within the protection and surveillance zones.

More information on the disease control strategy for CSF in Great Britain and the contingency plan for exotic notifiable diseases can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Can people catch the disease?

CSF cannot be contracted by humans, so there is no risk associated with contact with infected pigs.

Could it affect the food I eat?

No, it doesn't affect the food we eat and it can't be contracted by consuming pork products.

What can be done to reduce the risks?

Good biosecurity. Biosecurity measures should be practised as a matter of routine. Trucks, lorries, marketplaces and loading ramps (in or over which infected animals have travelled) are a disease risk until properly cleansed and disinfected. Roads may also become contaminated, and viruses may be picked up and carried on the wheels of passing vehicles.

The boots, clothing and hands of any person who has been in contact with infected animals can spread the disease.

Notifiable diseases

For information on diseases that are notifiable (which means there is a legal requirement to report cases and suspected cases to APHA), please see 'Notifiable diseases'.

Disease alerts

Livestock keepers can stay up to date with the latest classical swine fever developments via the APHA alert subscription service.

Further information

More guidance on classical swine fever can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law, please see 'Trading standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: December 2025

Key legislation

- Animal Health Act 1981
- Animal Health Act 2002
- Transport of Animals (Cleansing and Disinfection) (England) (No. 3) Order 2003
- Diseases of Swine Regulations 2014

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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