

Concern grows over African swine fever outbreaks

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The nation's hog producers have been urged to be on guard for African swine fever (ASF) by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The deadly swine disease, which cannot be transmitted to human beings by either direct contact or by consumption of pork or pork products, has broken out in the Dominican Republic and poses an immediate threat to hog production in the Southeastern United States and could conceivably spread to other regions.

Typifying the concern over the disease is the American Farm Bureau which wants the U.S. to help Brazil wipe out an outbreak of African swine fever there before the highly infectious disease spreads to this country.

In a letter to Secretary of Agriculture, Bob Bergland, Allan Grant, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, called on the U.S. to offer Brazil "expanded control and eradication assistance."

Grant said the nearly always fatal swine fever is also found in the Dominican Republic and is suspected to have spread to Haiti, but it is "virtually out of control" in Brazil. Grant urged the U.S. to request the Brazilian government to appropriate sufficient indemnity funds to encourage reporting of the disease and depopulation of infected herds.

The farm leader also

called for additional research to determine if the hard-to-kill virus can enter this country on coffee, cocoa beans or other imports. The disease is spread primarily through infected pork scraps in raw or improperly cooked garbage fed to swine and may be carried in clothing, equipment, vehicles and possibly by ticks.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has an emergency eradication program involving strict inspections and quarantines if swine fever breaks out in this country.

"With ASF only 125 miles from Puerto Rico, the danger of this feared swine disease entering the United States has greatly increased," says Dr. F.J. Mulhern, administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Mulhern emphasized the danger posed by feeding raw or improperly cooked garbage to swine, which is permitted in some Northeastern states. Pork scraps from infected pigs can carry the live ASF virus. If such scraps are fed in garbage that has not been thoroughly cooked, the virus can be passed on to susceptible swine, causing an ASF outbreak.

"In states where feeding garbage to swine is permitted, regulations require anyone feeding garbage to cook the garbage at 212

degrees for 30 minutes to kill disease-causing virus and bacteria," said Mulhern. "Cooking garbage is particularly critical now that ASF is so close to the United States. All it takes is one infected pork scrap to start an outbreak."

ASF was found in Brazil in June and has spread rapidly in that country. It was confirmed in the Dominican Republic on July 8. The only other introduction of ASF into the western hemisphere occurred in Cuba in 1971 and resulted in the loss of over one-third of that country's swine before it was eradicated.

"The ASF virus found in Brazil and the Dominican Republic may have caused milk illness initially before gathering strength. Our major concern has been the ASF virus that can kill 100 per cent of affected swine in a week, but this milder form of ASF could be even more dangerous. It may enter the United States and spread unchecked before it kills enough swine to make itself known."

Mulhern stated that since there is no vaccine for this disease, the only effective

way to prevent ASF from spreading unchecked is to find cases early and eradicate the disease quickly. To do this, APHIS officials are asking all swine owners to inspect their animals daily for signs of disease and report suspicious conditions im-

mediately to local, state or federal veterinarians.

Symptoms of ASF closely resemble those of hog cholera and may include, high temperature, weakness, tendency to huddle together as if cold, red blotches on the skin, higher than usual death

losses, little or no response to antibiotics.

"Prompt reporting of disease conditions will make all the difference in stopping African swine fever," said Mulhern. "We need the help of all hog raisers in the surveillance effort."

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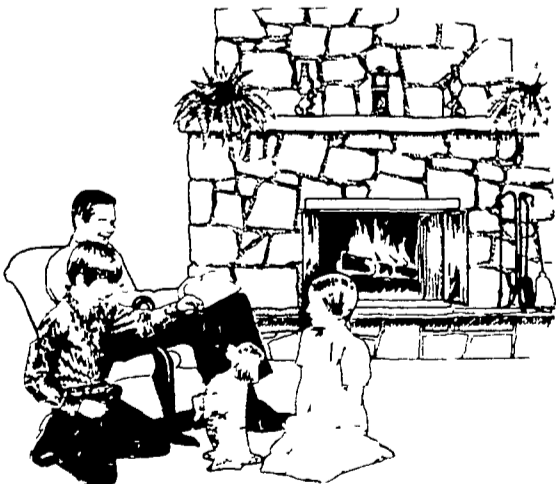
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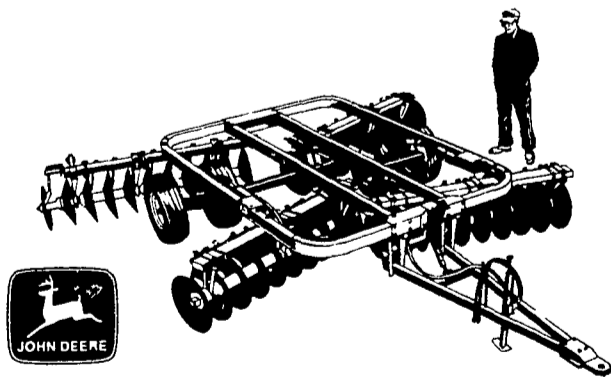
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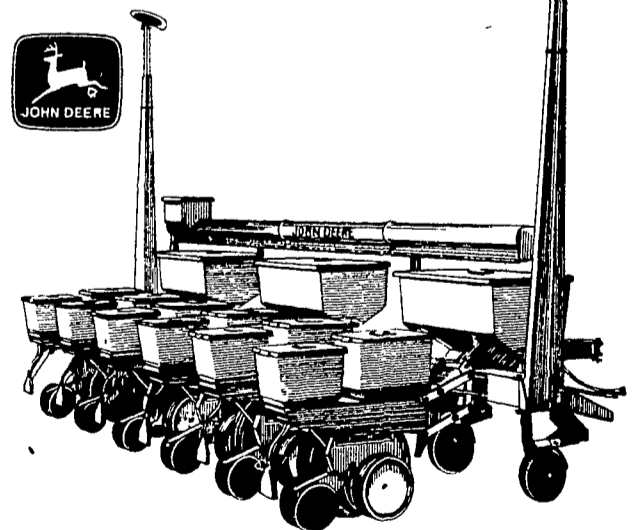


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