

News Column for Use Week of 05/20/2019
Brett Melton, Extension Agent: Livestock Production
River Valley Extension District
05/16/2019

African Swine Fever Outbreak

Don't be surprised if you walk into your local grocer or meat locker in the near future and see increased prices in pork products. This increase can be partially due to the spread of African Swine Fever (ASF) in China and other Asian countries.

ASF is a viral infection that spreads easily and quickly in domestic and wild pigs. Virtually any pig infected with ASF will die from the disease. One of the reasons for the easy transmission of ASF is that it can live for a long period of time in the environment and in the meat of infected animals. This allows for the virus to be transported easily by humans and vehicles.

ASF was first identified in the early 1900's in Africa and has been around since. Many countries in Africa and Europe have battled the diseases in the past. Recently, the disease has spread to new areas that have never experienced it before.

China had its first confirmed case of ASF in August of 2018. Since then, it has spread to every province in the Country. The disease has also spread to Mongolia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. It is tough to put a number on how many hogs have died in China, but China's National Bureau of Statistic estimates approximately 40 million have died and over one million have been euthanized. Those numbers will undoubtedly continue to rise.

China is the largest producer of pork in the world at 53,400 metric tons in 2017. It more than doubles the European Union in pork production, which is second at 23,675 metric tons, followed by the United States at 11,610 metric tons. Some early estimates indicate China's pork production will decrease by 20%-30%. Although it is too early to tell, this would equate to a 10% reduction in the world pork production. This large reduction will have economic consequences around the world.

A large decrease in hogs on feed will likely decrease the demand for soybeans – which is something that will ultimately affect farmers in the Midwest with potentially lower costs for soybeans.

ASF has never made it to North America. If the US remains free and clear of ASF, domestic pork production is likely to reap the benefits. However, some experts are fearful that ASF will find its way into the US. This would be devastating for US hog producers.

The good news about ASF, if there is any, is it poses no threat to human health. There are no reasons to be fearful of consuming pork or pork products. For more information call Brett Melton in the Concordia River Valley Extension Office at 785-243-8185 or email bmelton@ksu.edu.