

May 19, 2020: Risk assessment and biosecurity monitoring of government and commercial piggery farms and to create awareness on African Swine Fever (ASF)



Three teams comprising of officials from the Department of Livestock (DoL) and officials from Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) along with the officials from Regional Livestock Development Centres (RLDC) are currently in the dzongkhags for risk assessment and biosecurity monitoring of government and commercial piggery farms and to create awareness on African Swine fever (ASF).

After the ASF was first reported in adjoining Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh on May 2, 2020, the Department of Livestock and Bhutan Agriculture & Food Regulatory Authority conducted a joint sitting on 4th May 2020 to decide on emergency measures to prevent the incursion of this disease into Bhutan.

ASF is a severe viral disease of pigs affecting both domestic and wild pigs. The disease does not directly affect public health or food safety, it does not transmit from animals to humans, but it is a terminal and highly infectious viral disease that has a serious impact on pig population. There is no vaccine nor a cure for ASF. It can spread through direct contact with infected and sick pigs or indirectly through contact with contaminated meat products, feed, and objects such as shoes, clothes, vehicles, knives and other equipment or by the vector such as ticks (*Ornithodoros* species)

The officials are currently assessing the risk of ASF incursion into the country, biosecurity assessment of the Government and commercial piggery farms and at the same time creating awareness amongst the pig rearing farmers and the Livestock Extension Officers, BAFRA and wildlife officials. The officials are also in the process of collecting the tick samples from the pigs to ascertain if *Ornithodoros* tick species that act as vectors in the spread of ASF is present in Bhutan.

During the field visit, the Department of Livestock and RLDCs also distributed power knapsack sprayers to the Dzongkhag for

use in disinfecting the piggery sheds.