

US orders farms to report pig virus infections

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The U.S. government is starting a new program to help monitor and possibly control the spread of a virus that has killed millions of pigs since showing up in the country last year.

The porcine epidemic diarrhea virus, believed to be from China, causes severe diarrhea in newborn piglets, who die from dehydration.

It has killed pigs in 27 states since showing up in the U.S. last May. The disease has been blamed for recent increases in bacon and pork prices. Farmers have struggled to control the virus, because little is known about how it spreads and there is not yet a federally approved vaccine.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced Friday it is increasing efforts by requiring farmers to report infections and labs where farmers send tissue and [fecal samples](#) to report positive tests.

Farms that suffer an outbreak also will have to participate in a program to help control the spread of the disease

Previously, the USDA and the nation's pork industry tracked the disease with voluntary reports from the labs.

The USDA said it would commit \$5 million to fight the disease, boosting the \$1.7 million research effort already begun by the pork industry. It also will require farmers to report cases of a similar disease, swine delta coronavirus.

PED poses the most risk to newborn piglets, who die from dehydration. It does not infect humans or other animals.

Dr. Paul Sundberg, vice president of science and technology for the National Pork Board, said the new reporting requirements would provide better information on how many farms have been infected by PED and where. They also set a model for how similar diseases could be handled.

Sundberg said one important aspect of the announcement was that the USDA did not appear likely to institute quarantines, which could cripple the pork industry by stopping the movement of animals to slaughter.

The USDA has already been looking at how diseases like PED could spread within the United States, and said it will work with state agriculture departments to track the [disease](#) and keep watch on the movement of animals, vehicles and other equipment from infected farms.

Some states now require a veterinarian to certify that pigs coming to farms or slaughterhouses are virus-free.

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