

Three Latvia regions under emergency due to African swine fever

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Latvia declared a state of emergency Tuesday in three regions affected by African swine fever and said it expects hundreds of pigs to be culled at local farms to prevent the disease from spreading.

The government said "an emergency situation zone" status would prevail at the Krimulda, Adazi and Salaspils regions of the Baltic country for three months, until April 17.

Latvia's Food and Veterinary Service earlier reported an outbreak of African swine fever at a farm with more than 5,000 pigs in central Latvia's Krimulda region.

The source of the extremely contagious virus is unclear, but the farm has been put under quarantine and the government has earmarked additional 100,000 euros (\$107,000) to fight the disease.

Unlike swine flu, African swine fever doesn't affect humans but it can be deadly for domestic and wild boars, and cause massive losses for farmers.

Since 2014, dozens of outbreaks have been reported among pigs and wild boars in Latvia, its Baltic neighbors Estonia and Lithuania, and Poland, prompting Russia to ban pork imports from the European Union.

The infection was diagnosed in 1,146 wild boars across Latvia in 2016

and 43 new cases have been reported so far this year, according to the Baltic News Service

The news agency said the Latvian government has spent more than 13 million euros (\$14 million) to combat African swine fever since 2014.

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