

11 dead pigs with ASF found in QC

DA warns irresponsible swine raisers

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The Department of Agriculture (DA) has reminded backyard swine raisers that improper disposal of dead pigs is punishable by law, reiterating government's call to report all suspected African swine fever (ASF) cases to the local veterinary office following the discovery of dozens of dead pigs floating in Marikina River, a creek in Quezon City (QC), and a transport terminal in Nueva Vizcaya.

Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar renewed his appeal yesterday to hog raisers to report sick and dead pigs to their respective municipal or city veterinarians.

Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte said 11 hogs infected with the virus were found in Barangay Bagong Silangan. They also received reports of dead pigs in Barangay Payatas, also in Quezon City, but experts have yet to confirm if they also died due to ASF pending laboratory test results from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI).

Belmonte assured residents that they have established checkpoints to closely monitor and inspect markets, supermarkets, and slaughterhouses in the city.

At least 12 pigs were also reportedly dumped in a transport terminal in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya.

Dar said the local veterinary services office will coordinate with the DA's BAI to determine the cause of the pigs' sickness or death.

"It was utterly irresponsible on the part of the backyard raisers as they did not only violate current laws, but their misdoing also spreads the disease pathogens much faster," Dar said in a statement.

"They violated RA 8485, the Animal Welfare Act, as they deprived their dead pigs of adequate care, maltreating them in the process," the agriculture chief pointed out.

According to Dar, violators are punishable by imprisonment of not less than six months and not more than two years or a fine of not less than 11,000 and not more than 15,000.

"Also, the suspected backyard raisers violated RA 9003, the Solid Waste Management Act, as they brazenly and irresponsibly dumped dead pigs in public places like waterways," Dar said. Violators of RA 9003 are punished with a fine of not less than 1300 but not more than 11,000 or render community service for not less than one day to not more than 15 days.

Dar said that sickly animals deserve proper care and adequate treatment. Should they eventually die, there are strict protocols on how they should be disposed of.

"The DA through the BAI and the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) has taken all the necessary measures to manage, control, and contain the possible spread of African swine fever and major swine diseases," Dar said.

The DA has partnered with the private sector, particularly with commercial hog raisers' groups, local government units, Philippine National Police, and the military in an effort to control the spread of ASF to other areas.

"The irresponsible dumping of dead pigs simply adds scare to the public, and this should not be tolerated. The perpetrators must be punished in accordance with the law," Dar said. The Department of Health (DOH) reiterated on Sunday that the ASF does not pose any health risk to humans.

"Ito lang gusto natin ipaalala, wala itong harm sa tao, walang threat to human health, ang talagang naapektuhan ay yung swine population and yung food security ng bansa," said Health Undersecretary Rolando Enrique Domingo.

According to the World Organization for Animal Health, African swine fever is a highly contagious hemorrhagic viral disease of domestic and wild pigs but it is not a risk to human health.

"Actually, hindi transmissible ang virus to humans. Kaya lang hindi mo naman ma-encourage yung tao na kainin yun dahil lahat naman ng baboy kapag may sakit hindi dapat kainin pero anyway hindi naman sya nakakaffect sa humans (The virus is not transmissible to humans. But of course, we cannot encourage people to consume infected pigs)," Ana Cabal, city chief veterinarian, explained.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) has confirmed that ASF was the cause of swine deaths in Rizal, the first in the Philippines.

Agriculture Secretary William Dar said 14 out of the 20 blood samples of dead pigs from some backyard farms in Rizal tested positive for ASF virus based on laboratory tests conducted in the United Kingdom.

Recently, the DOH advised the public to cook pork thoroughly and to purchase pork meat only from reliable sources.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said that ASF is a "severe and highly contagious viral disease among domestic and wild pigs."

The DOH said that pigs infected with the ASF virus experience high fever, depression, loss of appetite; vomiting, diarrhea; and redness of ears, abdomen, and legs.

The health department advised hog raisers not to feed "raw or undercooked pork products (swill, garbage, or waste) to pigs." They should also monitor the pigs daily and check for signs of illness.

Pig handlers were also advised to wash their hands after coming from a farm or market, and clean their shoes and tires of vehicles used in the pig farm.

"The DOH urges the public to support measures being implemented by the DA and to work closely with concerned agencies in monitoring and responding to significant health events," the health department stated.