Position statement
October 2023

African swine fever: WOAH warns Veterinary Authorities and pig industry of risk from use of sub-standard vaccines

The continuing spread of African swine fever (ASF) is a global concern for the pig industry, as no region is left unaffected. For many years, the lack of a vaccine or effective treatment has made it very difficult to control the disease. The research community has been working to develop an effective vaccine, and recent announcements of modified live vaccines being approved or tested in some countries have raised hopes for the availability of new effective tools to contain the current ASF epidemic. Many countries are interested in using these candidate vaccines to help control ongoing outbreaks on their territory.

In this context, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) stresses the importance of using only **high-quality ASF vaccines** with **proven efficacy and safety,** that have undergone **regulatory evaluation and approval** in accordance with its international standards [1].

The risks of using poor quality or non-compliant vaccines

The use of poor quality or non-compliant vaccines may not provide any protection against ASF and risks the spread of vaccine viruses that may lead to acute or chronic disease. Additionally, these vaccine viruses could also recombine with field strains to generate novel strains that could evade detection and lead to acute, chronic and persistent ASF infections on farms.

ASF vaccination should not be used as a stand-alone disease control measure

Regardless of vaccine efficacy, vaccination programmes should be implemented as part of a comprehensive prevention and control strategy, which should include other important control measures such as strict biosecurity, import measures and movement controls.

Vaccination, when used, should be carried out as part of a well-designed vaccination programme that takes into account, among other factors, the local epidemiology of the disease, the expected objectives of vaccination and the adequacy and sustainability of the relevant technical, financial and human resources. They should always include post-vaccination surveillance and monitoring as well as an exit strategy for the cessation of vaccination, as mentioned in WOAH international standards on vaccination [2].

On the way to licensed ASF vaccines

Convinced of the added value that the international recognition of high-quality vaccines would have, WOAH is monitoring the progress of several ASF vaccine candidates at various stages of development. Some countries have either approved or are conducting field trials for the use of modified live vaccine candidates against ASF genotype II.

A new draft standard for the production of safe and effective vaccines against ASF has been proposed in the report [3] of the WOAH Biological Standards Commission, published in September 2023. **WOAH urges vaccine manufacturers and Members to consider these draft standards when developing and evaluating ASF vaccine candidates** for regulatory approval and to comment on them.

References

1. *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* (2023). 12th edition, WOAH.
2. Chapter 4.18. on Vaccination. *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* (2023). WOAH.
3. Report of the Meeting of the Biological Standards Commission. 4-8 September 2023. WOAH.

World Organisation for Animal Health
Founded as OIE