

Aujeszky's Disease

Pseudorabies

What is Aujeszky's disease and what causes it?

Aujeszky's disease, or pseudorabies, is a contagious viral disease that primarily affects pigs. The virus causes reproductive and severe neurological disease in affected animals; death is common. The disease occurs in parts of Europe, Southeast Asia, Central and South America, and Mexico. It was once prevalent in the United States, but has been eradicated in commercial operations; the virus is still found in feral (wild) swine populations.

What animals get Aujeszky's disease?

Pigs are the most frequently affected animals, however nearly all mammals, including cattle, sheep, goats, cats, and dogs can become infected with the virus. Pigs are capable of carrying the virus without showing signs of disease.

How can my animal get Aujeszky's disease?

Aujeszky's disease is usually spread by nose-to-nose contact with an infected pig (**direct contact**), but **aerosol** transmission through respiratory secretions can also occur. The virus can be spread on **fomites** (objects in contact with infected animals or their environment) or in the carcasses of infected pigs. Sexual transmission is possible as is transfer from sow to piglet during pregnancy.

Other animal species can also be infected with Aujeszky's disease virus after contact with infected pigs or from eating infected pork.

How does Aujeszky's disease affect my animal?

Disease may vary depending on the age and species of animal affected; younger animals are the most severely affected. Piglets usually have a fever, stop eating, and show neurological signs (seizures, paralysis), and often die within 24-36 hours. Older pigs may show similar symptoms, but often have respiratory signs (coughing, sneezing, difficulty breathing) and vomiting, are less likely to die and generally recover in 5-10 days. Pregnant sows can abort or give birth to weak, trembling piglets. Feral pigs do not usually show any signs of disease.

Other animals usually die within a few days of exposure. The animal will have intense itchiness concentrated in a patch of skin and will lick, rub or chew at the 'itchy spot'. Animals become weak, may be unable to stand, have convulsions and difficulty breathing and die. Dogs and cats can have difficulty swallowing and excessive drooling.

Can I get Aujeszky's disease?

No. Signs of disease have not been reported in humans.

Who should I contact if I suspect Aujeszky's disease?

Contact your veterinarian immediately. Aujeszky's disease is not currently found in domestic animals in the United States; suspicion of disease requires immediate attention.

How can I protect my animal from Aujeszky's disease?

Aujeszky's disease is usually introduced into a herd from an infected animal. All new animals entering the herd should be tested and isolated prior to introduction into the herd. Disinfection measures can be useful for controlling the spread of the disease and should be used on equipment, vehicles and footwear in contact with pigs. Domestic pig herds should be kept away from feral swine.

Vaccines are available for pigs but they only prevent signs of disease and do not prevent infection. In the U.S., a surveillance program monitors pig populations, making sure that the disease is not spread from feral pig populations to domestic pigs.

For More Information

CFSPH Technical Fact Sheets. Aujeszky's Disease at <http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/DiseaseInfo/>

USDA APHIS Pseudorabies at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/pseudorabies/

Aujeszky's Disease or pseudorabies, is a highly contagious disease of pigs that has severe economic consequences.



Photo from USDA Agricultural Research Service.