

Scientists, Biosecurity Research Institute study African swine fever

African swine fever virus threatens to devastate the swine industry and is positioned to spread throughout Asia. The virus has spread throughout the Caucasus region of Eastern Europe and was reported in China in August. It recently was detected in wild boar in Belgium.

Kansas State University researchers and the [Biosecurity Research Institute](#) have several projects focused on African swine fever. Their research topics vary, but they share the same goal of stopping the spread of African swine fever and preventing it from reaching the U.S.

If African swine fever enters the U.S., it could cause billions in economic losses to swine and other industries, animal disease experts say. It would devastate trade and international markets.

There is no vaccine or cure for the disease, which causes hemorrhagic fever and high mortality in pigs. It does not infect humans.

"African swine fever's introduction into China, poses an increased threat to the U.S.," said Stephen Higgs, director of the Biosecurity Research Institute. "Introduction of African swine fever virus into the U.S. would have an enormous impact on our agricultural industry. Research, education and training at the Biosecurity Research Institute help to improve our understanding and preparedness for this threat."

In 2013, the Biosecurity Research Institute became the first non-federal facility to be approved for work with African swine fever virus, Higgs said. The university projects at the Biosecurity Research Institute are part of research that can transition to the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility, or NBAF, once it is fully functional. African swine fever is one of the diseases slated to be researched at NBAF, which is under construction adjacent to Kansas State University's Manhattan campus.

The African swine fever projects at Kansas State University are funded in part by the \$35 million State of Kansas National Bio and Agro-defense Facility Fund and also have received support from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the pork industry.

[Read Stephen Higgs' editorial on African swine fever, which recently was published in Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases.](#)

