

## Regional pork industry stakeholders on the alert against emergence of a new pig disease

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The Caribbean Animal Health Network (CaribVET) is encouraging stakeholders in all pork industries in the Caribbean to take every precaution to prevent the introduction into the countries of the viral disease, Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED). PED has been present in both Europe and Asia for some time but since the first case was identified in the United States of America in April last year, the disease has spread rapidly to 27 states, across the border into Canada and was recently confirmed in Colombia, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Genetic analysis revealed that the epidemic is due to a new highly pathogenic strain of the virus, closely related to a Chinese strain that first emerged four years ago.

PED causes severe diarrhea, vomiting and dehydration in pigs of all ages and mortality rates of up to 100% in suckling piglets. PED only affects pigs and cannot be spread to other animals or to humans. It also poses no risk to food safety, which means that the pork from pigs which have recovered from the disease is fit to eat. However, an outbreak of PED has the potential to cause severe economic damage to the pork industry due to high death rates in piglets.

Once infected, a sick animal will begin to show signs of the disease within as little as 24-36 hours. The PED virus is spread exclusively through fecal matter, on the surface of contaminated objects and materials and via mechanical carriers such as animals and people moving within or between farms. As PED presents clinical signs which are very similar to transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE), a common disease caused by another virus, diagnosis of PED has to be conducted via laboratory testing of samples (feces, intestines) taken from sick pigs. Animals which have been exposed to, or vaccinated against TGEv, are not protected against the PEDv and a vaccine against this disease is still being developed and tested.

The best protection against the disease is to increase vigilance and implement preventative biosecurity measures on all pig farms. Farmers are being asked to take particular care to clean and disinfect vehicles entering the farm. Clothing, boots and equipment should not be moved between herds. Extra care must be taken when introducing new animals into the herd. If farmers detect any signs of PED in their pigs, they should report it immediately to their local Ministries of Agriculture or veterinary officer.

CaribVET, working in tandem with national animal health authorities in the region, and with the support of international agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), is stepping up its efforts to educate stakeholders, to put a set of protocols in place for the protection of the regional pork industry against this serious threat and to keep the region informed of the PED situation.

- [CaribVET Newsletter](#) [1]
- [PED - Press release](#) [2]

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