

Swill feeding

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What is swill feeding?

Swill feeding is the traditional name for the feeding of food scraps and other waste material to pigs. This practice has caused foot-and-mouth disease outbreaks overseas, including the catastrophic epidemic in the United Kingdom in 2001. Swill feeding is now **banned** in all States and Territories of Australia. Some food wastes have been categorised as 'prohibited substances' and it is illegal to feed them to pigs.

Which food wastes are prohibited substances?

You **must not** feed meat, meat products or anything that has been in contact with meat to pigs. This includes:

- any meat product including pies, sausage rolls, bacon and cheese rolls, pizza, deli meats, table scraps, etc;
- any carcase or part of a carcase of any mammal including meat, bones, blood, offal and hide (pigs that feed on carcasses are also at risk of contracting anthrax, which is contagious to humans);
- excreta (faeces) of any mammal;
- household, commercial or industrial waste including restaurant waste and discarded cooking oils;
- anything that has been in contact with prohibited substances via collection, storage or transport in contaminated containers (such as meat trays and take-away food containers).

These restrictions apply to all pigs, including pet pigs.

An exemption exists to allow the use of meat baits for the control of feral pigs, but only under permit and the supervision of NSW DPI or Livestock Health & Pest Authority (LHPA) rangers.

Are there any food wastes that are not prohibited substances?

Yes, provided they have not been in contact with meat products or stored in contaminated containers.

You can feed:

- Milk, milk products or milk by-products of Australian origin or legally imported into Australia;
- Eggs;
- Fish – preferably as meal, processed by commercial hot rendering and purchased from a reputable produce store or feed merchant;
- Tallow or gelatine;
- Dry meal made from meat, blood or bone, processed by commercial hot rendering and purchased from a reputable produce store or feed merchant;
- Manufactured dry dog and cat food;
- Non-meat bakery waste;
- Fruit, vegetable or cereal waste;
- Vegetable oil or oilseed waste that has not been used for cooking.

NB: the feeding of food waste to pigs tends to be popular because it reduces food costs. However, it is important to be sure that the food waste you are using is 'clean' waste and not contaminated with any chemical or pesticide residues.

You should request a feedstuff vendor declaration to comply with your quality assurance (QA) program. The pig industry QA program is APIQ. An example of this vendor declaration can be found on the [Australian Pork Limited](#) website in the PigPass QA download page.

Why all the fuss over swill?

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) has been identified as the single greatest threat of any disease to Australian livestock industries. An outbreak of FMD in Australia would have devastating economic and social impacts. Much of Australia's large export market and the competitive advantage Australia gains from its FMD-free status could be lost, possibly forever. Economic losses, as a result of an FMD outbreak in Australia, have been estimated between \$7 billion (3 months outbreak) and \$16 billion (12 month outbreak).

The feeding of swill to pigs provides the most likely opportunity for the FMD virus to become established in Australia. Most of the FMD risk materials that might enter Australia are illegally imported meat products.

The introduction of other exotic (foreign) diseases to Australia, including African swine fever, classical swine fever and swine vesicular disease could also have an economic impact on the pig industry in Australia. All three diseases are regularly transmitted in other parts of the world as a result of feeding infected swill to pigs.

Altogether, there are more than one hundred exotic animal diseases that would have varying degrees of economic and/or public health effects if they became established in Australia.

This is why the feeding of swill is banned in all States and Territories of Australia.

If you are in the food business

There are laws controlling the collection, storage, treatment and disposal of food waste ('swill') in all States and Territories of Australia. Significant penalties apply for people convicted of supplying and/or feeding swill to livestock, especially pigs.

If you are involved in a business (eg café, restaurant, fast food outlet, hotel, hospital, boarding school, tourist lodge) that results in the production of food waste or you are involved in the handling, transporting and disposal of food waste it is vital that you are aware of what food waste is permitted to be supplied to livestock owners (especially pig owners) for the purpose of feeding their animals and what food waste is not permitted to be supplied to livestock owners.

Your local Council, LHPA or NSW DPI office can supply you with detailed information about how your business can comply with the prescribed legal national swill feeding standards.

Feral pigs

Feral pigs can spread FMD and other diseases, some of which are harmful to people including brucellosis, leptospirosis and Q fever. Good biosecurity is important to keep feral pigs away from your livestock.

Rubbish dumps and tip sites should be securely fenced to prevent access by feral pigs.

Need more information?

Further information in relation to 'feeding of prohibited substances to pigs' legislation can be found in part 6, section 71 of the [Stock Diseases Regulation 2009](#).

NSW Trade & Investment Policy TI-O-132: [Feeding of prohibited substances to pigs](#).

Look, check, ask a vet!

If you see something unusual in your livestock, please report it to your private veterinarian, district veterinarian or phone the national Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline number **1800 675 888**.

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