

## EBOLA UPDATE - QUARANTINE LIFTED IN PANGASINAN FARM

DA AND DOH ANNOUNCE COMPLETE RESULTS OF TESTS ON HUMAN AND PIG SAMPLES FOR ERV;  
QUARANTINE LIFTED IN PANGASINAN FARM

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The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Health (DOH) today announced the complete test results done by the Research Institute of Tropical Medicine (RITM) and then the US Centers for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) on pig and human samples collected since the start of the Ebola Reston investigation.

The Joint FAO/OIE/WHO Mission, with its national counterparts, collected pig blood and tissue samples from two affected farms currently under quarantine.

Of 160 pig blood samples that were positive for antibodies, 133 came from Bulacan and 27 from Pangasinan as reported by RITM. Those from Bulacan were traced to pigs at different age groups while those in Pangasinan were found in sows and

just one piglet.

"This means that there is on going viral transmission in Bulacan but past infection with recovery was the case in Pangasinan," DA Secretary Arthur Yap said, noting that a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the presence of the virus was done by the US CDC to confirm ongoing transmission.

Of the 19 pigs with tissue samples positive for ERV by real-time RT-PCR, none came from Pangasinan since all were traced to Bulacan. This now corroborates the earlier tests done by RITM that Bulacan has ongoing viral transmission.

"Up to the present, none of the pigs that were sampled showed signs of any illness during the collection of the samples. As a precautionary measure, depopulation will be carried out in the Bulacan farm. Quarantine can now be lifted in the Pangasinan farm where the transmission appears contained," DA Secretary Yap said.

Experts explained that depopulation is done to prevent further spread of the Ebola Reston within and outside the farm. The Joint Mission recommended this management imperative considering that there was possible pig-to human transmission and ERV comes from the Ebola family of viruses known to be highly pathogenic to humans. The Reston virus, however remains to be the only strain not to cause significant illness in humans.

Depopulation of pigs in the Bulacan farm will be done immediately following current OIE procedures that ensure protection of animal welfare (that is, humane killing), operator safety (to minimize human exposure) and bio-security (to curtail wider spread). Preparations are underway to expedite the depopulation. National and local government agencies with International Observers will participate to implement depopulation procedures. Government has arranged a fair compensation for the Bulacan farm to ease compliance with depopulation and to cushion economic losses including livelihood of affected farmers.

The RITM and US CDC tested about 147 human samples for Ebola Reston Antigens and Antibodies (either IgG or IgM). These came from the affected farms (Bulacan and Pangasinan) and from slaughterhouses in Pangasinan and Cabanatuan. Of these, six human blood samples were found to be positive for IgG antibodies.

"The additional positive human sample (five were previously reported) was traced to a slaughterhouse worker in Cabanatuan. This worker is male and was not sick during visits by the investigation team. He does not recall any direct contact with sick pigs but remembers having flu-like illness himself in the past 12 months. There is no evidence however that the flu-like symptoms can be attributed to ERV infection," DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

Experts said that no other worker of 25 who were tested from the same slaughterhouse in Cabanatuan were positive for Ebola Reston antibodies and none of those who were revisited (8) recalled getting sick in the past 12 months or were sick during visits of the investigating team.

“To date, all close contacts of humans with positive antibodies who were tested have remained antibody-free signifying absence of illness in affected humans that can lead to possible human-to-human transmission. Ebola Reston poses a low risk to human health at this time.” DOH Secretary Duque III said.

The health chief said that as a general precaution, farm workers at the Bulacan farm, shall undertake Self-Monitoring Protocol at home to monitor presence of fever up to 21 days from date of last presence in the farm. This will be done without restricting their movements.

“Until depopulation is carried out, some of the workers can still handle pigs in the farm using of course, proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) so that routine animal husbandry can be maintained,” DOH Secretary Duque said.

The DOH reiterates the Sanitation Code of the Philippines that all workers in farms and slaughterhouses should wear PPE (gloves, mask, boots, apron).

Concerned agencies and partners will continue to rigorously implement the same four lines of defense: 1) reporting all unusual occurrence of herds with sick or dying pigs; 2) cautious handling and disposal of sick or dying pigs including that of raw meat, blood and other bodily secretions and practice of proper hand washing; 3) prohibiting and confiscating double dead meat that will enter the food chain; and 4) cooking pork thoroughly with adequate heat.

“Pork is still safe to eat when properly handled and cooked adequately (no pink parts and juices run clear). Consumers are advised to source meat that has the National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS) seal,” DOH Secretary Duque said.

The DA will expand surveillance to other farms within confined radius of affected farms and in other areas as well, where past or current outbreaks were/are reported.

The DOH will carry out surveillance in those farms or areas where Ebola Reston will be detected. Both the DA and DOH together with international and domestic agencies and partners, will carry out further scientific studies to determine the source of Ebola Reston in pigs, characterize pig to pig and pig to human transmission and also infection or possible illness in pigs and humans.

For more updates, go to the Department of Health website, [www.doh.gov.ph](http://www.doh.gov.ph)