

Top Veterinarian Warns of Swine Fever

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African Swine Fever, lethal to pigs though harmless to humans, has reached Central Russia and may spread to all European parts of the country, the country's chief veterinarian said Tuesday.

"We are on the verge of a new wave of proliferation of the virus," Nikolai Vlasov, deputy head of the Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service, told reporters.

He said outbreaks of African Swine Fever, which has no cure, have been registered this year at five small farms in the Tver region, which borders the Moscow region.

Medium and large pig breeding farms are well protected against African Swine Fever and other diseases. It is mainly small farms that are affected by the contagious virus, which is spread partly by wild boars.

African Swine Fever, which was confirmed for the first time in Russia in 2007, has so far been found mainly in the south of the country. It continues spreading due to delays in the adoption of efficient measures to prevent its proliferation.

Three years ago the disease was discovered outside the Southern Federal District only twice. In the first six months of this year the virus was found in five regions outside the district, in northwestern and central Russia, Vlasov said.

"We give instructions that are ignored," he said.

The watchdog earlier this year proposed a program to eradicate the pig killer within seven years, costing about \$400 million. The government has so far failed to approve it.

"If things continue to go as they do now in the Tver region, where wild boars are plentiful, the northwest of the country may soon start resembling the south," Vlasov said.

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