

# Japanese Encephalitis surveillance



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## Information for pig owners

- Japanese encephalitis is an acute mosquito-borne viral disease that can cause reproductive losses in pigs and encephalitis (rare but serious infection of the brain) in other susceptible species. The disease occurs mostly in pigs and horses. In rare instances, it can cause disease in other animals and people.
- Japanese encephalitis virus (JE) has been detected in Australian piggeries interstate. JE is not a food safety concern, and pork products remain safe to consume.
- This is an evolving situation.
- The Northern Territory Government (NTG) is increasing surveillance for JE in the Territory, and is inviting pig owners to participate in this voluntary monitoring program.
- If you want to take part, you can submit healthy pigs for blood testing and allow mosquito traps to be set up on or near your property by calling your local livestock biosecurity branch.

## Testing pigs

- The NTG's livestock biosecurity and veterinary officers will attend your property to collect blood samples from your pigs. Weaner piglets which are 3 – 6 months old are best, but pigs of different ages can be sampled too.
- The procedure is quick and painless.
- Staff are trained in livestock handling and will use specialised equipment and low stress handling methods to catch and hold pigs. They may need to use a soft rope snare and pig boards to hold pigs still while the samples are taken.
- Blood samples will be taken from the jugular or ear vein.
- Staff will test the samples in a laboratory to see if the pigs are currently infected with JE, or have antibodies to the virus. If your pig has antibodies, it might mean they have been exposed to the virus previously.
- It can take up to 3 weeks for the test results. Staff will call you to let you know the results. If you have any questions, you can call your local livestock biosecurity branch.

## Testing mosquitoes

- NTG staff might also contact you to get permission to set a mosquito trap on your property.
- The mosquitoes will be tested for JE virus.
- If you have questions about mosquito trapping and test results, you can call 8922 8807.



## What happens if JE is found in my pigs or near my property?

- NTG staff will call you with the results of the tests. They will tell you if the results show evidence of JE in the pigs or mosquitoes on or near your property.
- There is no specific treatment for JE in pigs.
  - If your pig is healthy, there is no need for any treatment.
  - If your pig becomes sick, talk to your vet about how to care for your animal. If you have more than one pig, you may want to separate the healthy and infected animals.
  - Pig owners who have a pig that gets very sick from JE may wish to humanely euthanise it.

## Reporting

- Japanese encephalitis is a notifiable disease in animals as well as humans.
- This means if you notice anything unusual or suspicious in your animal, you must call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.
- Call the Centre for Disease Control to report JE in people on 1800 008 002.

## For more information

Contact your local Livestock Biosecurity Branch by calling:

- **Darwin:** 8999 2123
- **Katherine:** 8973 9716
- **Tennant Creek:** 8962 4458
- **Alice Springs:** 8951 8181

More information about JE in Australia can be found at:

[outbreak.gov.au](https://outbreak.gov.au)

More information about JE in the Territory can be found at:

[nt.gov.au/japanese-encephalitis](https://nt.gov.au/japanese-encephalitis)



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