

Erysipelas is a notifiable disease under the Animal Diseases Act (Act No. 35 of 1984)

Abattoirs: ERYSIPELAS



InfoPak

WHAT IS SWINE ERYSIPELAS?

- This is a bacterial infection also known as Diamond Skin Disease
- Up to 50% of pigs are carriers of this bacteria and shed the bacteria in faeces and saliva without clinical signs
 - Easily contaminates water and feed sources as well as the environment
- In pig production environments, outbreaks occur during times of stress (such as weaning or transport) because stress weakens the animals immune system
- Outbreaks can occur suddenly or become a long-term problem
 - Sudden (acute) outbreaks typically show signs ranging from sudden deaths to animals showing fever, loss of appetite, painful joints and skin lesions that can resemble 'diamond' shapes
 - Long-term (chronic) disease occurs in animals after a sudden outbreak with typical signs of swollen joints and lameness. The bacteria also affects the animals hearts and when they are physically strained, can show signs of difficulty breathing and exhaustion
- This bacteria is sensitive to antibiotics but recovery requires early detection and treatment
- Prevention is far more effective than trying to treat outbreaks
 - Strict vaccination programmes in production houses and ensuring proper biosecurity and hygiene management aid in controlling outbreaks
 - Culling of pigs with clinical signs can also aid in ensuring a healthy herd



Erysipelas in humans

- Infection in people is rare but can cause a severe skin condition called cellulitis
- People that work with animals are most at risk such as farmers, butchers and veterinarians
- Infection in people occurs through direct contact when the bacteria are able to enter the skin through breaks/cuts
- Usually people's hands and fingers are the most affected BUT any exposed area of the body with open skin wounds can get infected



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- Typical signs when infected are:
 - Bright red skin, swelling and throbbing pain around the affected area, blisters and low-grade fever
- Treatment with antibiotics is effective for Erysipelas:
 - If you work with animals and suspect you have been infected, it is important to contact your nearest doctor or clinic
- Prevention: people that work with animals especially pigs should be made aware of the disease and clinical signs
 - Protective clothing and gloves should be worn
 - Any open wounds should be covered
 - Ensure thorough handwashing with soap and water after handling animals



Reference:

Bush, Larry. Erysipeloid. March 2023.

<https://www.msmanuals.com/professional/infectious-diseases/gram-positive-bacilli/erysipeloid>

Forde, Taya. Swine Erysipelas. May 2020.

<https://www.merckvetmanual.com/generalized-conditions/erysipelothrix-rhusiopathiae-infection/swine-erysipelas>

Contacts:

TITLE	CONTACT NO.	E-MAIL	ADDRESS
State Veterinarian: George	044-803-3771/0	SVGeorge@westerncape.gov.za	4 Varing Avenue, George
State Veterinarian: Boland	021-808-5028/ 5253	SVBoland@westerncape.gov.za	Western Cape Department of Agriculture building, Muldersvlei road, Elsenburg
State Veterinarian: Swellendam	021-808-5059/ 028-425-4850	DOA.svswellendam@westerncape.gov.za	67 Voortrekker St, Swellendam
State Veterinarian: Beaufort West	023-414-9220/1	DOA.svbeaufortwest@westerncape.gov.za	Blyth St, Beaufort West
State Veterinarian: Vredendal	027-201-3514/-0	DOA.svvredendal@westerncape.gov.za	Cnr Matzikama and Noord St. Vredendal
State Veterinarian: Malmesbury	022-433-8915/0	DOA.svmalmesbury@westerncape.gov.za	Cnr Spoorweg and Munisipale St, Malmesbury
State Veterinarian: Oudtshoorn	044-203-9443/5	DOA.svoudtshoorn@westerncape.gov.za	43 Van Der Riet St, Oudtshoorn
State Veterinarian: Worcester	021-808-5052	DOA.svworcester@westerncape.gov.za	30 Van Arckel St, Worcester

