

Pig virus spreading, more expected

Canadian Press on the weekend reported that a new case of porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) had been detected in Simcoe County, possibly 200 miles from the earliest Ontario ones ? in the London area.

It was the fifth case of the deadly pig virus, in three separate counties, in about one week. The earliest case in North America had been detected in the U.S. in April 2013, and the virus there had spread to 23 states almost simultaneously, according to reports.

PEDV is described as being one of the corona viruses, some of which are transmissible to humans. However, it has been emphasized that PEDV is transmissible only to other pigs, and not to humans.

Early in the detection of the virus in the western hemisphere, it was reported that there was no known vaccine available, which would have been true of this continent, but Korean scientists had developed a vaccine as early as the mid-1900s.

A report of a study by CH Kweon, BJ Kwon, JG Lee, GO Kwon, and YB Kang in 1999 revealed that, when pregnant sows had been inoculated, the suckling piglets were protected ?from challenge of wild type PEDV.?

Otherwise, the piglets under 10 days of age are the most at risk. Mortality estimates vary from 90 to 100 per cent.

Last week, Premier and agriculture minister Kathleen Wynne pledged \$2-million to help fight the spread of the virus, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency announced it would permit the importing of a vaccine. As well, a Minnesota university developed a blood test for detection of the virus.

The outbreak is estimated to be potentially \$45-million worth of bad news for hog producers and the province's agri-food industry, and comes at a time when the premier challenged the industry to double its exports.

Agricultural interests, meantime, have begun challenging the premier to protect farmland from loss through development and quarries, such that there will remain places to grow food.

By Wes Keller