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Self-declaration of historical freedom from African swine fever by the United States of America and the establishment of a Protection Zone for U.S. Territories in the Caribbean

Self-declaration submitted to the OIE on 6 October 2021 by Dr Burke L. Healey, Delegate of the United States of America (USA) to the OIE

1. Introduction

This is to formally request that the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) publishes the self-declaration of historical freedom from African swine fever (ASF), as defined in the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)*, by the United States of America (USA), including all fifty (50) States and its Territories. The USA further self-declares the establishment of a Protection Zone (PZ) for U.S. Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico¹ (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands² (USVI) in a separate document. This self-declaration explicitly follows the *Self-declaration publication SOP version 1.4, approved June 2021* and is compliant with all of the following relevant chapters and articles in the *Terrestrial Code*:

- Chapter 1.4., Article 1.4.6.
- Chapter 1.6., Article 1.6.3.
- Chapter 4.4, Articles 4.4.1.-3., and Article 4.4.6.
- Chapter 15.1., Article 15.1.1., Articles 15.1.3.-4., Articles 15.1.8-30., Articles 15.1.32.-33.

The USA is considered historically free from ASF and conducts surveillance in compliance with the pathogen specific Chapter 15.1. The geographical boundaries of historical freedom include all fifty (50) States of the USA and its Territories (Annex IIa.). All varieties of *Sus scrofa*, including domestic and captive wild pigs, permanently captive, farmed, or free range, used for the production of meat or other

¹ Commonwealth of Puerto Rico – includes the islands of Mona, Monito, Desecheo, Caja de Muertos and numerous other small cays that lie offshore of PR.

² U.S. Virgin Islands – comprised of three principal islands – St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas – plus 50 smaller islands, cays and islets that are part of the Caribbean archipelago.

commercial products or use, or for breeding, wild and feral pigs, and commodities of suids are imported in accordance with the relevant articles of this chapter (see section 2.4. of this document for details).

The USA is also self-declaring the establishment of a PZ for U.S. Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). This is the first self-declaration of a PZ by the USA. The geographical boundaries of the PZ are the U.S. Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for PR and the USVI (Annex IIb.). The extent of this PZ and its geographical limits has been established by the Veterinary Authority on the basis of natural, artificial, or legal boundaries, and made public through official channels.

The species and target subpopulation include all varieties of *Sus scrofa*, including domestic and captive wild pigs, permanently captive, farmed, or free range, used for the production of meat or other commercial products or use, or for breeding, and wild and feral pigs.

The starting date of the declaration of the of historical freedom is October 6, 2021. The statement that the USA Delegate takes responsibility for the self-declaration is attached (Annex I).

2. The following documented information supports compliance with the requirements of the Terrestrial Code

2.1. Evidence that the disease is a notifiable disease in the entire country

The Animal Health Protection Act ([AHPA](#)) provides the authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to issue orders and promulgate regulations to prevent the introduction into the USA and its Territories of any pest or disease of livestock. The Secretary has delegated authority to issue such orders and regulations to the Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The National Animal Health Reporting System ([NAHRS](#)) is the comprehensive reporting system for OIE-reportable diseases in the USA and its Territories. The NAHRS reportable disease list includes all OIE-reportable diseases, including ASF, and additional diseases of interest. [9 CFR 161.4](#) requires accredited veterinarians, who are approved to act as representatives for the Federal government (see section 2.3.2, below), to report to the Federal Veterinary Official and the State Animal Health Official all suspected or diagnosed cases of any animal disease not known to exist in the USA and its Territories. APHIS document ([VS Guidance 12001.4](#)) lays out the details for communicating a suspected or diagnosed foreign animal disease (FAD). The USA has a proposed federal rule that, once cleared, will be added to the *Code of Federal Regulations* and will provide the legal obligation to report detections of disease by any animal health professional³. Currently, all States and territories have legal reporting requirements for reportable animal diseases, including ASF. There is no one date when all State requirements went into effect, however those requirements date back at least 30 years.

2.2 History of absence

ASF has never been detected in the USA and its territories, including in wildlife. The USA has been a member of the OIE since 1976 and consistently reports cases of notifiable diseases to the OIE [World Animal Health Information System \(OIE-WAHIS\)](#). (examples of the 6-monthly reports from 2003 to the present can be found in [this link](#)).

2.3. Surveillance including an early warning system for all relevant species in the USA

The USA and its Territories have national regulations and procedures in place for the identification requirements for swine in interstate commerce and animal disease traceability. The swine industry has had mandatory identification for swine in interstate commerce since 1988. Identification of swine in

³ From the proposed federal rule, an *animal health professional* is an individual, corporate entity, or animal health organization with formal training in the diagnosis or recognition of animal diseases and/or pests of livestock. Examples of animal health professionals include, but are not limited to, veterinary medical professionals, diagnostic laboratorians, biomedical researchers, public health officials, animal health officials, trained technicians, zoo personnel, and wildlife personnel with such training.

interstate commerce is described in section [9 CFR 71.19](#). General requirements for traceability, recordkeeping, and documentation requirements for interstate movement of swine can be found in [9 CFR 86](#). Official identification and animal disease traceability are critical components of surveillance and monitoring systems, emergency response procedures, and control measures to prevent the spread of exotic swine diseases such as ASF, as described in the United States Department of Agriculture ([USDA](#)) [Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service \(APHIS\) African Swine Fever Response Plan Red Book](#).

2.3.1 Passive surveillance in the USA and its Territories

Passive surveillance for ASF virus applies to all swine and is constantly conducted within the USA and its Territories. Reporting by producers, veterinarians, animal health technicians, slaughter inspectors, and laboratory personnel is required (per [VS Guidance Document 12001](#)) for suspect or confirmed cases of FADs, program diseases, or diseases not known to exist in the USA. Any suspect case of ASF must be immediately reported to State and/or Federal animal health officials. Any suspect cases in domestic or feral swine having clinical signs compatible with ASF will trigger a FAD investigation. From 2016 – 2021, the USA conducted 171 FAD investigations in swine, accounting for 2,018 diagnostic samples tested for swine diseases, including ASF.

Feral swine that are found dead or visibly sick are euthanized and tested for ASF virus. [APHIS](#) field personnel routinely monitor feral swine populations and notify APHIS leadership of any suspect cases for ASF. APHIS works collaboratively with States with established populations of feral swine to reduce the number of feral swine and associated damages they inflict to agriculture, property, natural and cultural resources, and human health.

Additionally, there is passive surveillance for FADs by official personnel of the [USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service](#) (FSIS) via antemortem and postmortem inspection of every animal at slaughter per [9 CFR 309](#) and [9 CFR 310](#). FSIS employs approximately 1,100 Public Health Veterinarians and 7,600 inspection personnel to perform the in-plant inspection and food safety verification tasks.

2.3.2 Legal obligations to report suspect cases and cases of notifiable diseases

APHIS administers the [National Veterinary Accreditation Program](#) for accredited private veterinarians. This program authorizes private veterinary practitioners to work cooperatively with Federal veterinarians and State animal health officials. Regulations in [9 CFR 161](#) outline the requirements and standards for federally accredited veterinarians, which include disease reporting. Accredited veterinarians are required to immediately report to the Federal and/or the State Animal Health Official all diagnosed or suspected cases of a communicable animal disease for which APHIS has a control or eradication program, and all diagnosed or suspected cases of any animal disease not known to exist in the USA, including ASF. There are approximately 70,000 accredited veterinarians in the USA and its Territories.

2.3.3 Training and awareness programs

Awareness and education for producers, veterinarians, and the public, including travelers, is distributed through multimodal methods, including the [APHIS website for ASF](#) and various swine industry webpages, including the [National Pork Board](#), [National Pork Producers Council](#), and the [Swine Health Information Center](#); extension and outreach services; industry meetings; professional conferences; factsheets and pamphlets; videos; and other technical documents and resources. APHIS administers [training and professional development](#) to Federal and State Veterinarians, accredited veterinarians, diagnosticians, animal health technicians, epidemiologists, port veterinarians, foreign veterinary medical officers, APHIS program specialists, and others whose responsibilities require updated knowledge of animal disease diagnosis and identification. APHIS conducts annual training for Federal employees in a wide variety of topics, including FAD diagnostics, agriculture emergency response, and animal identification. Additional information on a specific course can be found in the [PDS Catalog](#).

2.3.4 Active surveillance in the USA and its Territories

In 2019, due to the increased spread of ASF in Asia and Europe, APHIS expanded the active classical swine fever surveillance program to include ASF. The program has resulted in strengthened detection capabilities to enhance outbreak preparedness and support claims of disease freedom for ASF. The comprehensive swine hemorrhagic fever surveillance plan focuses on three USA swine populations for surveillance, including larger commercial swine herds, higher-risk (less biosecure) swine herds, and feral swine. All populations are monitored by observation, and if clinical signs consistent with the case definitions for ASF are observed, an FAD investigation is immediately initiated. The details of this plan, [Swine Hemorrhagic Fevers: African and Classical Swine Fever Integrated Surveillance Plan](#), can be found on the [APHIS website for ASF](#) under technical documents.

APHIS evaluated the effectiveness of this plan in meeting outlined goals one year after its implementation. From June 1, 2019, to May 31, 2020, 6,522 specimens were tested for ASF, the majority of which were samples from slaughter and aggregation points, testing of samples from sick pigs submitted to veterinary diagnostic laboratories, and FAD investigations. All results were negative. Additional details can be found in the [Swine Hemorrhagic Fever Surveillance Evaluation Brief](#) (April 2021) on the [APHIS website for ASF](#) under surveillance.

2.3.5 Laboratory capacity in the USA and its Territories

At the national level, the [National Veterinary Services Laboratories](#) (NVSL) serves as the national veterinary diagnostic reference and confirmatory laboratory for foreign and emerging diseases of significant concern for animal health. NVSL is divided into two locations: the Diagnostic Bacteriology and Pathology Laboratory, Diagnostic Virology Laboratory, and Diagnostic, Bioanalytical, and Reagent Laboratory are in Ames, Iowa, and the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL) is on Plum Island, New York. Animal health testing capabilities are expanded by the [NAHLN](#), which is a nationally coordinated network and partnership of Federal, State, and university-associated animal health laboratories. The NAHLN provides the capability to diagnose both endemic and foreign high-consequence livestock pathogens in animals and environmental samples and are likely to serve as the first-line laboratories for recognition of a pathogenic agent in animals. A list of the laboratories, accompanied by a summary of the diseases for which the laboratories are approved to test, can be found at [this link](#). A map of the NAHLN laboratories, depicted alongside the diseases for which they are authorized to test, can be found at [this link](#).

The diagnostic tests available to identify the ASF virus include antibody detection by Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA), fluorescent antibody test, virus isolation, sequencing, and polymerase chain reaction (PCR). FADDL has a current non-emergency capacity to run 500 samples per week. Both FADDL and the laboratories in Ames, Iowa, have an emergency capacity to run 1,200 samples per week. Additionally, there are currently 48 NAHLN laboratories approved for ASF PCR testing with a capacity to run 57,000 tests per day, with pooled sample capacity at 285,000. For antibody detection by ELISA, 5,000 samples can be run per week with increased emergency capacity as needed. NVSL has established an ASF laboratory in PR to enhance laboratory capabilities and to expedite ASF testing in the U.S. Territories in the Caribbean and surrounding region. The PR Laboratory has a capacity of 1,200 samples per week and assists in ASF diagnostic testing of samples from Puerto Rico and the USVI.

3. Measures implemented to maintain freedom in the USA relevant to Chapters 15.1. and 1.4.

3.1. APHIS has conducted an analysis of the *Potential Pathways of ASF Introduction from Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico to Conterminous United States* to assess the overall risk for the introduction and spread of ASF into the PR and for the conterminous USA.

3.2. ASF is a notifiable disease in the entire USA and its Territories, and all suids showing clinical signs or pathological lesions suggestive of ASF are subjected to appropriate field and laboratory investigations; (see section 2.1. of this document for details). Samples from both wild and domestic suids showing clinical signs or pathological lesions are submitted to the NVSL and tested for ASF (see section 2.1. and 2.3.6. of this document for details).

3.3. An ongoing awareness program is in place to encourage reporting of all suids showing clinical signs or pathological lesions suggestive of ASF (see section 2.3.3. of this document for details).

3.4. The USA *Veterinary Authority* has current knowledge of, and authority over, all domestic and captive wild pig herds in the country (see section 2.1. of this document for details).

3.5. The USA *Veterinary Authority* has current knowledge of the species of wild and feral pigs and African wild suids present, their distribution and habitat in the country. APHIS maintains data on feral swine, including escaped or released pigs, wild boar, and Russian or Eurasian boar; information can be found at [this link](#).

3.6. For domestic and captive wild pigs, an appropriate surveillance program in accordance with Articles 15.1.28. to 15.1.31. and 15.1.33. is in place (see section 2.3. of this document for details).

3.7. For wild and feral pigs, a surveillance program is in place in accordance with Article 15.1.32., considering the presence of natural and artificial boundaries, the ecology of the wild and feral pig and African wild suid populations and an assessment of the likelihood of ASF spread including consideration of the presence of *Ornithodoros* ticks (see section 2.3. of this document for details).

3.8. The domestic and captive wild pig populations are separated by appropriate biosecurity, which is effectively implemented and supervised, from the wild and feral pig and African wild suid populations, based on the assessed likelihood of spread within those populations, and surveillance in accordance with Article 15.1.32.; Because ASF has never been detected in the USA or its Territories, the presence and/or control of *Ornithodoros* ticks is not relevant beyond typical, general health and hygiene practices associated with other pests and parasites.

3.9. The USA has implemented measures to maintain freedom in compliance with Article 1.4.6. (see section 2. of this document for details). In addition, APHIS prohibits imports of pork and pork products from ASF-affected countries (additional information can be found at [this link](#)).

3.10. The swine industry in the USA and its Territories is continually provided with information and guidance on methods to implement biosecurity best management practices by State and federal agencies ([APHIS Swine Biosecurity Factsheet](#)), including for swine raised with outdoor access ([APHIS Biosecurity for Outdoor Swine](#)).

3.11. APHIS oversees and performs animal import quarantines at designated import centers; performs inspection of imports of animals and export certification of animals and products; performs animal import inspections at designated Northern and Southern land border ports; collaborates with other units to provide a unified, seamless approach to developing and implementing import and export policies across the organization; and performs export certifications at designated Northern and Southern land border ports ([Import Controls](#)).

3.12. APHIS has established a *Federal Order Suspending the Interstate Movement of Live Swine, Swine Germplasm, Swine Products, and Swine Byproducts from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands*; additional information can be found in [this link](#). The Federal Order suspends the interstate movement of all live swine, swine germplasm, swine products, and swine byproducts from Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) until APHIS can establish sufficient mitigations to authorize such movement. When APHIS has established such measures, it will issue an amended Federal Order.

3.13. The Swine Health Protection Act (SHPA) at [9 CFR 166](#) regulates food waste containing any meat products fed to swine. Compliance with this act ensures that all food waste fed to swine is properly treated to kill disease organisms.

3.14. In accordance with [Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations 330.400 -330.403](#)), regulated garbage is not allowed to be imported into the USA and its Territories, except from Canada. Regulated garbage arriving on means of conveyances from foreign regions, other than Canada, and from U.S. Territories is allowed entry under certain conditions.

3.15. Additionally, APHIS issued a Federal Order ([DA-2021-01](#)) imposing several restrictions on the importation of dogs for resale from regions where ASF exists or is reasonably believed to exist.

3.16. The USA is also self-declaring the establishment of a PZ for U.S. Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

3. Conclusions

Based on this request and all the evidence provided herein, the USA requests the publication of the self-declaration of historical freedom established by the USA for all of the country including its Territories, and the separate self-declaration for establishment of a PZ for its Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for PR and the USVI, for ASF, as defined in the *Terrestrial Code*. This self-declaration explicitly follows the *Self-declaration publication SOP version 1.4, approved June 2021* and is compliant with all of the relevant chapters and articles in the *Terrestrial Code*.

The OIE Delegate of the USA declares that the USA, including all of its territories, is a country historically free from ASF in compliance with the provisions of Articles 15.1.4. point 1) and 1.4.6. point 2) b. and the establishment of the Protection Zone (PZ) for African Swine Fever (ASF) that includes its Territories in the Caribbean, specifically for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) as of October 6, 2021, in compliance with the provisions of Chapter 1.4., 1.6., 4.4. and Article 15.1.4. of the *Terrestrial Code* (2021) and consistent with the information provided in OIE-WAHIS.

In accordance with Article 4.4.6., if the animal health status of an established protection zone changes owing to the occurrence of a case, the animal health status of the rest of the country or zone is not affected, provided the measures in place prevent the spread of disease and allow the subsequent establishment of a containment zone in accordance with the criteria in Article 4.4.7.

Annex I.

I, the undersigned, Burke L. Healey, Delegate of the United States of America (USA) to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), take responsibility for the self-declaration of historical freedom from African swine fever (ASF) for the entire USA, that includes all of its Territories, and the establishment of a Protection Zone for U.S. Territories in the Caribbean, that includes the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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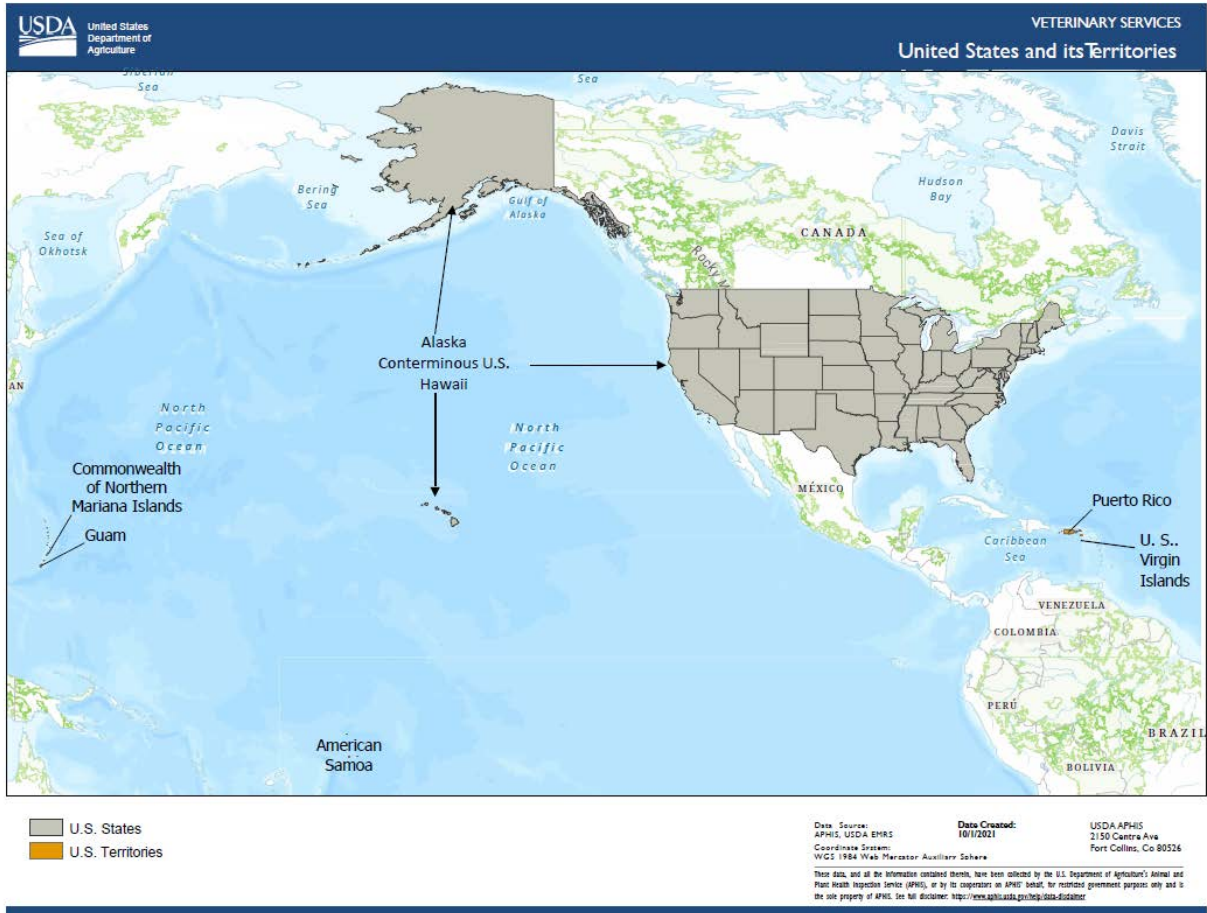
Drawn up on October 7, 2021.

Signature of the Delegate:



Burke L. Healey, D.V.M. USA Delegate to the OIE

Annex IIa.



Annex IIb.

