

Brucellosis & Feral Pig Hunting

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Feral pig hunting is the number one risk for catching brucellosis in NSW. Infections can be prevented by: wearing protective gear, safely dressing & butchering the pigs, thoroughly cooking the meat, protecting your family and protecting your dogs.

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that can be caught from infected animals when blood, body fluids or tissues from an infected animal comes in contact with your eyes, nose, mouth or cuts or grazes in your skin, or through eating undercooked meat. It can cause severe, long-lasting health problems, and even death, if it is not diagnosed and treated quickly.

Feral pig hunting is the number one risk for catching brucellosis in NSW. Farmers and others who shoot or trap feral pigs are also at high risk of infection.

Pig hunting dogs are also at high risk, and can potentially pass on the infection to other dogs and humans.

You can protect yourself, your family and dogs from brucellosis and other diseases that animals may carry by following these steps:

1. Wear protective gear

- Avoid direct contact (bare skin) with animal blood, body fluid or tissues – when dressing & butchering wear rubber gloves, overalls, eye protection and boots that can be cleaned and disinfected
- Protect all cuts and grazes – use surgical/latex gloves to cover cuts and abrasions on hands and waterproof dressings on other areas.

2. Practice safe slaughtering and gutting methods:

- Avoid cutting yourself:
 - Use clean, sharp knives
 - Slow down, watch your hands and take the time to make clean cuts
 - Make sure that you have enough lighting to see properly
 - If cut or scratched, immediately stop, thoroughly clean the wound with soap and warm water, dry with a clean cloth, and protect it using waterproof dressings or surgical/latex gloves
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while cutting up the pig
- Avoid opening high risk tissues such as swollen joints and testicles
- If the pig looks sick, do not handle or butcher it, and do not give the meat to your dogs
- After slaughtering and gutting:
 - If possible, bury or burn the waste (animal carcass, tissues, etc.) – take particular care when handling and disposing of reproductive organs and tissues.
 - Wash off urine, faeces, blood and other body fluids that may have got onto your hands or clothes, and thoroughly clean all working areas and contaminated vehicles with soapy water
 - Clean vehicles used to transport carcasses with soapy water – avoid using high pressure hoses or cleaners
 - Clean all tools, reusable gloves, boots and surfaces with a disinfectant (such as diluted bleach solution – 1 cup of bleach for every 9 cups of water)
 - Thoroughly wash hands and arms in soapy water; carry and regularly use alcohol hand sanitiser when soap and water is not available.

3. Safely butcher and thoroughly cook your meat

- Thoroughly wash your hands, arms and all surfaces with soapy water before and after butchering
- Butcher meat in an area away from where the pig was slaughtered and gutted
- Keep raw meat, chopping boards, knives and utensils separated from cooked meat and other foods
- Thoroughly cook your meat before eating
- Freezing, smoking, drying and pickling do not kill the bacteria that causes brucellosis
- Chill raw and cooked game meat immediately.

4. Protect your family

- Pregnant women and their babies are at greater risk of severe disease, and so should avoid all contact with feral pigs, hunting activities and avoid contact with hunting dog
- Children should be kept a safe distance away from slaughtering, field dressing and butchering to reduce the risk of being splashed with body fluids of the pig

5. Protect your dogs

- Do not feed dogs (or other domestic animals) raw feral pig meat, bones, testicles, foetuses or other reproductive tissues from the pig
- Wash dogs after each hunt – preferably wash dogs before leaving the hunting site, while wearing protective gear, and away from others
- Do not breed from dogs suspected or known to be infected
- If dogs are wounded during a hunt, use protective gear while administering first aid (gently wash wounds with clean water and cover with dressings) and take the dog to a veterinarian – avoid suturing wounds in the field
- Watch for signs of illness in your dogs and contact your veterinarian if you have any concerns – follow the link from more information on brucellosis in dogs:
<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans/brucellosis-in-dogs/information-sheet/brucellosis-in-dogs>

6. If sick, seek professional healthcare early

- If you, your family or friends develop a flu-like illness within 1 week to 6 months after contact with feral pigs, see your doctor and tell them about your hunting activity.

Further information

For further information about brucellosis in humans:

- See the NSW Health website:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/brucellosis.aspx>
- Call your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

For further information about brucellosis in animals see the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) websites on:

- Being a responsible pig dogger: Hunt safe, hunt legal: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/hunting/game-and-pests/be-a-responsible-pig-dogger>
- Brucellosis in dogs: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/animal/humans/brucellosis-in-dogs>
- Brucellosis in pigs: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/pigs/health/a-z-pig-diseases/brucellosis>