ASF could become a human health risk

The African swine fever (ASF) virus, may in the future become dangerous for humans, according to the head of the Russian Epidemiology Service, Chief State Sanitary Doctor Gennady Onishchenko, at the press-conference in St. Petersburg. According to him almost all viruses from time to time go through mutation processes which can give them some additional functions.

"If we take into account the fact that pig physiology is very close to human physiology, and they suffer illness in almost the same way as we do, there is reason to believe that in the next round of mutation the virus can become dangerous to humans," he said.

Meanwhile, Onishchenko said that at present the ASF occurs only in animals, and the most effective way to prevent the spread of the disease is "very severe quarantine measures".

He also criticized the recent Lithuanian initiative, which intends to build a 500-kilometer fence on the border with Belarus to prevent the spread of ASF. "Let them put a fence but the measure is useless" Onishchenko said, adding that the ASF can be brought into the territory through the illegal importation of contaminated meat which is hard to control.

by Vladislav Vorotnikov Jul 11, 2013
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