

## Fines increased for pork products from Vietnam

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A passenger arriving at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport on VietJet Air Flight VJ-942 from Hanoi on Friday last week watches as customs officers inspect his luggage.

**Photo: Chu Pei-hsiung, Taipei Times**

Vietnam has been added to the list of countries at high risk of having African swine fever-contaminated pork, so the fines for people found bringing pork products from Vietnam into Taiwan have been raised, the Council of Agriculture said on Tuesday.

The council's statement followed an announcement by the Vietnamese Department of Animal Health earlier in the day that African swine fever had been found in pigs on three family farms in the provinces of Hung Yen and Thai Binh, and that more than 200 pigs had been culled.

Fines for those bringing pork from countries affected by African swine fever were increased on Dec. 17 last year to NT\$200,000 (US\$6,488) for a first offense and NT\$1 million for second offenses.

Airports nationwide began inspecting the carry-on luggage of all passengers arriving from Vietnam on Saturday last week, after a pork sandwich carried by a traveler arriving at Tainan Airport from Ho Chi Minh City on Feb. 5 tested positive for African swine fever.

The passenger was fined NT\$30,000 for contravening customs regulations, but anyone now arriving from Vietnam with meat products in their luggage would be subject to the higher fines for African swine fever, council Deputy Minister Huang Chin-cheng (黃錦承) said on Tuesday.

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Vietnam rears an average of 30 million pigs annually and three quarters of all meat consumed there is pork, he said.

Smuggling and international travelers carrying meat products in and out of Vietnam were exacerbating the problem there, he said.

As a precaution, airports nationwide would begin checking the luggage of all passengers arriving from Phnom Penh, as Cambodia borders Vietnam, Huang said.

The Central Emergency Operation Center for African swine fever said the virus has been found in an increasing number of pork products from China.

The most recent incident involved sausages discarded at an airport by a passenger arriving from Fuzhou, China, it said.

The virus was confirmed in one case in October, two in November, four in December, 11 in January and eight so far this month, the center said.

Vietnam is now the third Asian country to be affected by African swine fever, after China and Mongolia.

A UN official in September last year said that it was inevitable that the disease would spread from China to its neighboring countries, most likely through infected pork products being transported across borders.

Additional reporting by agencies

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