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News: African swine fever

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African swine fever (ASF)

- African Swine Fever (ASF) is a **severe viral disease that affects wild and domestic pigs typically resulting in an acute haemorrhagic fever.**
- The disease has a **case fatality rate (CFR) of almost 100 per cent.**
- Its routes of transmission include **direct contact with an infected or wild pig (alive or dead), indirect contact through ingestion of contaminated material such as food waste, feed or garbage, or through biological vectors such as ticks.**
- African Swine Fever (ASF) **does not affect humans** but can be catastrophic for pigs.
- The disease is characterised by **sudden deaths in pigs.**
- Other manifestations of the disease include **high fever, depression, anorexia, loss of appetite, haemorrhages in the skin, vomiting and diarrhoea** among others.

- Even so, while ASF is lethal, it is **less infectious than other animal diseases** such as foot-and mouth disease.
- But as of now, there is **no approved vaccine**, which is also a reason why **animals are culled to prevent the spread of infection**.

Pygmy Hog

- Pygmy Hogs are **native to alluvial foothills of Himalayas at an elevation of up to 300m**.
- It is the **world's rarest and smallest wild pig**.
- It is one of the **very few mammals that build its own home, or nest, complete with a 'roof'**.
- Pygmy Hog is also an **indicator species**. Its presence **reflects the health of its primary habitat, the tall, wet grasslands of the region**.
- Today, the **only known population is endemic to Bhutan and Manas National Park** of Assam state in India. They **were introduced to Sonai - Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary** under Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP).
- IUCN Status of Pygmy Hogs is **Endangered** and they're protected under wildlife protection act in its **Schedule I**.

- **Pygmy Hog Sucking Louse** is a parasite that feeds only on **Pygmy Hogs** will also fall in the same category of risk of endangered as its survival is linked to that of host species.
- According to an **article published in the journal 'Science'**, the **African swine fever could fatally affect the population of pygmy hogs**.
- **Eight of 12 captive bred pygmy hogs** were recently released to the **Manas National Park**. This is the second batch to have been reintroduced into the wild under the **Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP)** in a year.

Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP)

- **Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme** is a **collaborative project of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, IUCN/SSC Wild Pig Specialist Group, Forest Department, Govt. of Assam and the Ministry of Environment & Forest, Govt. of India**.
- It is implemented in Assam by the **Rare & Endangered Species Conservation Unit (RESCU) of Eco Systems-India**.
- **Six hogs — two males and four females — were captured from the Bansbari range of the Manas National Park in 1996** for starting the breeding programme.

- The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary (35 hogs), Orang National Park (59) and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary (22).
- With most recent release, the number of pygmy hogs reintroduced into the wild under the PHCP reached 142, which is more than their current original global wild population.