

Frequency and origin of live imports of breeding-stock pigs to the United States

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Key Points:

- International live pig transport is a possible route for disease entry into the U.S.
- The first step in assessing this risk is to categorize and analyze breeding stock import data
- Small numbers of imported breeding pigs have come from a variety of countries, but the majority come from Canada

Live-pig transport around the globe continues to play an important role for production companies as these companies are always seeking the highest genetic makeup level on their market pigs with the goal of improving whole system economics to maintain their competitiveness. In light of the global swine infectious disease situation, transport of live pigs is one factor that generates interest from industry stakeholders because of its possible role in disease transmission. The first step to better understanding the potential role of United States (U.S.) swine trade in disease introduction a baseline description of the data is needed. , Towards this end we characterized the frequency and origin of live-imports of breeding-stock pigs into the U.S.

Data from USDA official records (1) on the frequency and quantity of live imports of breeding-stock pigs was analyzed. Imports were describe as absolute, number, and relative, percentage, frequencies by year and country of origin.

The U.S. has imported a total of 839,152 breeding-stock pigs between 2003 and 2018, with an average of 54,523 pigs imported per year (1) (Figure 1). Most (837,346 or 99.8%) of these pigs were imported from Canada, while other countries accounted for approximately 0.2% (1,806). Excluding Canada, the percentage contribution of each country for breeding-stock imports is illustrated in Figure 2. For the cumulative period, the number of pigs imported into the U.S. was 1,273 from Ireland, 268 from France, 150 from Spain, 47 from the United Kingdom, 31 from the Netherlands, 21 from Italy, 10 from Portugal, and 6 from Sweden. In 2019, hog imports totaled 13,011 pigs for the period between January and July, all originated from Canada. No data on importation of semen or embryos were available.

The importation of ill animals into the U.S. is a major concern for disease introduction. However, when we look at the data, U.S. imports of breeding swine come primarily from Canada, a neighboring country with a similar health status. The relative contribution of other countries in breeding hog imports remains low. Current regulations for swine imports into the U.S. for breeding-stock purposes requires health certificates that the pigs being imported are disease free and have not been exposed to diseases of interest in the country of origin. In addition, breeding-stock companies work intensely to meet USDA’s guidelines from a health and biosecure transport perspective in order to import pigs into the U.S. Animals are also subjected to visual health inspection at the port of entry and quarantine may be requested. Thus, the risk of disease introduction through legal imports appears to be low. A full report on U.S. swine breeding-stock trade with a review of current regulations is available at:

<https://www.swinehealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SHIC-18-193-Breeding-Stock-Final-Report.pdf>.



Figure 1. Total annual U.S. breeding pig imports from 2003 to 2018

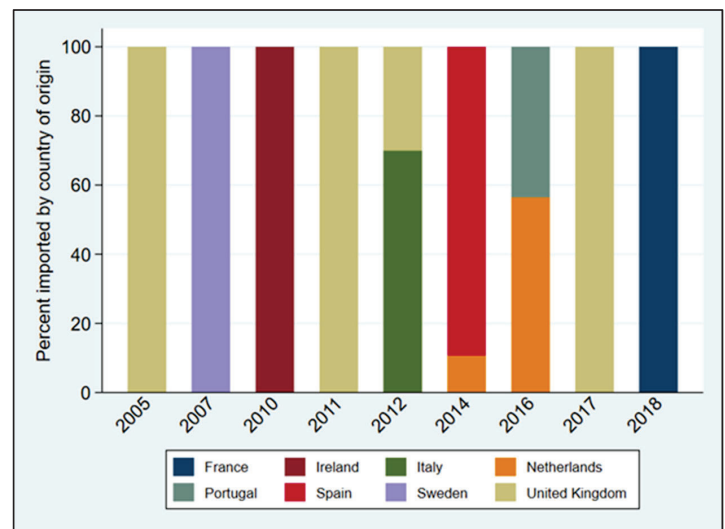


Figure 2. Country of origin of breeding pig imports into the U.S., excludes Canada