

## Porcine Hepatitis E

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Hepatitis E virus (HEV) is a zoonotic agent that can be transmitted from pigs to humans via consumption of pork and products derived of it. Recently, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has published a scientific opinion urging for measures to prevent Hepatitis E virus (HEV) from entering the food chain.

Unfortunately, there is only limited knowledge about the world-wide prevalence of HEV in pig herds and consequently on the potential risk for consumers.

Various studies demonstrated high levels of HEV in the pig production units. Antibody prevalence of up to 60% is commonly found in pig herds. However, also antibody-negative herds are identified, even in high prevalence regions. These findings are of great interest; it is crucial to learn more about these negative herds and about the differences between non-infected and infected herds. Identification of differences in holding conditions, management, sourcing of piglets etc. will help to identify risk factors for HEV infection in pig herds as well as for the introduction of the virus into herds. Strategies and measurements to reduce or eliminate HEV in pig herds can then be implemented and consequently the risk of introducing HEV into the food chain reduced.

The implementation of an appropriate risk based surveillance system for HEV in the pre-harvest sector would be an effective and economic way to collect information on the herd infectious status and to continuously reduce the prevalence of HEV infection among livestock. Risk based surveillance systems help reduce the risk of introducing zoonotic diseases into the food chain and increase consumer health protection.

The high prevalence of HEV found in many countries shows the importance of surveillance and control of this important zoonotic pathogen. For this purpose it is of high importance to use adequate diagnostic tools, such as the PrioCHECK<sup>®</sup> HEV Ab porcine. The PrioCHECK<sup>®</sup> HEV Ab porcine is, due to the use of antigens of both, genotype 1 and 3, capable to detect antibodies against all HEV genotypes.