

# Measures should be truly effective, yet with careful and preventive application

By Vladimir Khromov

**Reasonable approach required in the struggle against African swine fever: as announced at meeting about the epizootic situation in swine breeding and resistance to virus**

World experience shows that quick and complete slaughter of livestock (domestic and wild pigs) in areas where the disease is centred, is essential, alongside the organisation of buffer zones. In the past, such measures have been used in Spain, Portugal, France, Belgium and the former USSR. President Alexander Lukashenko now considers that Belarus must take the same approach to ensure effective eradication of swine fever, although urges that a reasonable approach is essential.

The President announced at the meeting: "In order to successfully defeat the epidemic, all government

authorities and administrative structures must liaise precisely and observe strict measures to ensure hygiene regulations are met in all places where pigs are kept. Naturally, carefully monitoring will play a part."

According to the President, in order to prevent the disease spreading, preventive measures must be taken. He cited the experience of the Minsk Region, where cattle are slaughtered at the abattoir of a meat processing and packing factory; meat is then either used in the factory or is removed for use elsewhere.

The Government has particular working groups overseeing the process but there have been a lot of complaints. President Lukashenko underlines that the state cannot ignore this problem and the financial implications. However, he strongly objects to creating yet more red tape, preferring to see direct action, saying, "I strongly object to paperwork. We must take

concrete measures, as has been confirmed by experience for a long time."

The President of Belarus is concerned that African swine fever is spreading across Russia, as another outbreak has been discovered in the Yaroslavl Region. "We can't fence ourselves off from the whole world, especially from Russia. Accordingly, we need to take effective measures," he underlines, emphasising the necessity of strengthening control over forage arriving in Belarus, and reducing imports. He warns against officials ignoring the trend in African swine fever and has demanded that all possible assistance be given to farmers.

"I'm not greatly worried about the process of this struggle, but I am worried about public reaction to measures undertaken by the authorities and veterinary services. I'm receiving ever more messages to the Presidential Administration: citizens' appeals concerning how they are treated.

We're carrying out a sacred mission of battling the disease but are also creating a new problem: negative public reaction to our actions and those of veterinary services. I should warn you: this is inadmissible," said the President.

Mr. Lukashenko notes that African swine fever does not present a threat to human health but admits that, regretfully, no vaccine yet exists for the disease. The only solution is to isolate outbreaks and slaughter animals showing signs of illness, to prevent its possible spread.

He emphasises, "We must eradicate any signs of infection since breaking of elementary sanitary norms and the quarantine regime on farms and private farmsteads could lead to an expansion of the epidemic and seriously damage both the pig-breeding branch and the wider national economy. No spread of the illness is permissible economically — at larger

complexes or on private farmsteads. We've already lost some pigs (worth over a billion Roubles) so let's not lose any more."

Belarus has been promoting the development of pig-breeding countrywide, investing in this sphere for domestic consumption and export.

President Lukashenko feels confident that the strict measures required are being undertaken at pig farms, since no further outbreaks have been reported. Smaller farms seem to be most at risk, with 97 percent of cases occurring on private farmsteads. He is adamant that the disease must not spread to larger complexes.

"We can't allow the loss of this industry. Pigs need to be bred at each rural farmstead: both for domestic food needs and for wider market sale," said the Head of State. He notes that private farmsteads currently house about 900,000 pigs: over 20 percent of the total in Belarus.

# In the warm heartland of Slavic civilisation

Over 600 delegates from 35 countries of the world take part in 15th International Congress of Slavists, first held in the Belarusian capital

By Yuri Chernyakevich

In mid-August, the capital of Belarus hosted the largest international scientific forum, at Minsk Concert Hall. The first day saw the venue packed to the rafters, gathering over 600 delegates from around the world. All are engaged in aspects of Slavic study: language, literature, folklore, history and material and spiritual culture.

Belarusian, Russian, Polish, Slovak and Bulgarian languages were heard in the forum lobby, as old friends met again with pleasure. Many have worked together previously on publications and joint projects. Clearly, Slavic studies are alive, following their own laws, as they have for the past decade or more, as thousands of people from various corners of the globe give their time, talent and hearts to this science.

The International Congress of Slavists is held every five years, in turn by one of the Slavic countries. This was Belarus' first hosting, enabling those from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Israel, Italy, Canada, Lithuania, Russia and elsewhere to debate various questions: from creating a dialect dictionary to working on catalogues of Slavic manuscripts. The agenda was filled with plenary and section reports, round tables and conferences of special commissions accredited under the International Committee of Slavists.

President Alexander Lukashenko sent his greetings to all those at the 15th International Congress of Slavists, saying, "It's symbolic that Belarus has been chosen to host this anniversary forum: the heart of Slavic



15th International Congress of Slavists gathers researchers from around the world in Minsk

civilisation. We have contributed to the preservation of its values and ideals, protecting its heritage and always remembering that the only way to allow our Slavic brothers to keep their identity in our globalised world is to promote understanding of the uniqueness of each nation and its spirituality"

The Chairman of the International and Belarusian Committees of Slavists, Alexander Lukashanets, a correspondent member of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the forum is vital to the development of

Slavic studies, even promoting knowledge of Slavs in non-Slavic countries.

Some of the participants of the congress were visiting Belarus for the first time, while others first made the trip long ago. Canadian Robert Orr, who first visited to study in Soviet days, notes, "The city has changed since those times. There are more cars and shops." He emphasises that Canada's Belarusian Diaspora is engaged in publishing various scientific editions 'in native languages'. Mr. Orr has taken a great interest in Slavic languages since childhood, when he

lived in Scotland. "As a boy, my mother listened to radio programmes in Russian and I used to look at the Russian alphabet in our encyclopaedia, being curious to learn the language," he muses.

Delegates of the congress naturally toured the many sights of Minsk when not taking part in debates, visiting museums and art galleries. An exhibition of the most important Slavic editions of the past five years opened at Minsk's State Linguistic University, featuring books donated by various delegates.

## Permanently connected to World Wide Web

By Petr Overin

**Mobile Internet soon to double in speed**

Belarusian operators are to increase the speed of data transfer from 21 Mbps to 42 Mbps by the end of the year, thanks to high speed burst data transfer via 3G-networks. The technology is already available to residents of Minsk and regional and district centres, as well as those living in settlements with keen demand for mobile data transfer services.

## Entrance permitted and simplified

By Ivan Semiplatov

**Visa procedure changed for foreigners at Minsk National Airport**

The Council of Ministers has adopted a regulation 'On Introducing Changes to the Visa Rules of the Republic of Belarus'. From August 22nd, all foreign citizens arriving in Belarus via Minsk National Airport will be able to receive their entrance visa on the spot, as long as they have submitted supporting documents to the Foreign Admission Division at the Main Consulate Department at least 3 working days before their expected date of arrival (at least 5 working days for longer-term visas).

Where arrival is linked to serious illness or death of a close relative, visa support documents may be submitted at the moment of application.

Short-term student visas can also be issued at Minsk National Airport if a representative of the organisation authorised by law to issue invitations for study is in attendance on arrival.