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ViroVet and The Pirbright Institute are first to demonstrate efficacy of antivirals in ASFV infected pigs

Belgian biotechnology company [ViroVet](#) partnered with researchers at The Pirbright Institute in 2019 to develop and test the first antiviral drugs that act against [African swine fever](#) (ASF). In the absence of a vaccine, antiviral drugs will provide an alternative control method which can help limit clinical signs in pigs and lower virus replication. This will reduce the spread of disease and help to contain outbreaks, ultimately reducing the number of pigs lost to this deadly viral infection.

The research, part funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council [LINK programme](#), has led to the selection of several antiviral drugs that were already screened by ViroVet. These antivirals have shown to be potent and selective inhibitors of ASF viral replication in cells in the absence of cellular toxicity.

A first candidate drug was trialled at Pirbright's unique high containment facilities this summer and demonstrated effectiveness in reducing ASF viral replication and disease in pigs. One third of the treated animals survived the challenge with ASF virus without significant disease signs and appeared to have cleared the virus. Further studies are planned with optimised dose regimens in the following months.

[Dr Erwin Blomsma](#), Chief Executive Officer of ViroVet: "The recent outbreaks of ASF in Asia have caused more than 100 billion USD damage, there is a clear and urgent need for antiviral drugs as well as vaccines."

[Dr Linda Dixon](#), Head of the [African Swine Fever Group](#) at The Pirbright Institute, said: "This study is a very promising first step in providing an important tool for control of African swine fever that can be used alone or in combination with vaccines.."

[Dr Nesya Goris](#), Chief Development Officer and co-founder of ViroVet added: "African swine fever is a devastating and often fatal disease. It is rewarding to be part of a team working on a potential solution."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

ViroVet develops antiviral drugs as well as plasmid launched live attenuated virus or PLLAV vaccines. For more information about the antiviral drugs or the PLLAV vaccine technology check out the [video](#) or visit our [website](#).

For more information please contact Erwin Blomsma, CEO of ViroVet NV
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Pirbright is currently developing vaccines for ASF and carrying out fundamental research to understand more about the virus. For more information about this work and ASF, visit the Pirbright virus [web page](#), which features a [short video](#) about the disease, a downloadable [factsheet](#) and images of clinical signs for veterinary reference.

For more information please contact communications@pirbright.ac.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 231120.

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About ViroVet

ViroVet is a biopharmaceutical company with a clear objective to develop innovative technologies to improve the health and value of livestock. The company is headquartered in Leuven (Heverlee), Belgium and has a pipeline of antiviral drugs and thermostable vaccines. ViroVet is one of the top-20 disruptors & innovators in animal health and was named start-up of the year 2015 and 2017 by Animal Pharm (part of the Business Intelligence Division of Informa PLC).

For more information about ViroVet see: www.virovet.com

About The Pirbright Institute

The Pirbright Institute is a world leading centre of excellence in research and surveillance of virus diseases of farm animals and viruses that spread from animals to humans. Based in the UK and receiving strategic funding from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Institute works to enhance capability to contain, control and eliminate these economically and medically important diseases through highly innovative fundamental and applied bioscience.

The Institute is an independent company, limited by guarantee and a registered charity, governed by a Board of non-executive Trustee Directors.

With an annual income of £37 million from grants and commercial activity, and a total of £43.7 million strategic investment from BBSRC UKRI during 2021-2022, the Institute contributes to global food security and health, improving quality of life for animals and people.

For more information about The Pirbright Institute see: www.pirbright.ac.uk

About BBSRC

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government.

BBSRC invests in world-class bioscience research and training on behalf of the UK public. Our aim is to further scientific knowledge, to promote economic growth, wealth and job creation and to improve quality of life in the UK and beyond.

Funded by government, BBSRC invested £451 million in world-class bioscience in 2019-20. We support research and training in universities and strategically funded institutes. BBSRC research and the people we fund are helping society to meet major challenges, including food security, green energy and healthier, longer lives. Our investments underpin important UK economic sectors, such as farming, food, industrial biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

More information about BBSRC, its science and its impact: www.bbsrc.ukri.org
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