



Fact Sheet

H1N1 FLU VIRUS (HUMAN SWINE INFLUENZA) – ADVICE FOR VETERINARIANS AND SWINE PRODUCERS

Preliminary testing conducted by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) indicates the presence of H1N1 flu virus in a swine herd in Alberta. The pigs were likely exposed to the virus from an individual who had recently returned from Mexico and had been exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Signs of illness were subsequently observed in the pigs. All pigs have since recovered or are recovering.

The herd has been placed under quarantine, and the CFIA is working with public health colleagues to determine the most appropriate next steps to ensure that public and animal health remain protected.

The CFIA is asking veterinarians and producers to increase their biosecurity measures to limit any risks to animal health.

The safety of the food supply is not affected. Influenza viruses do not affect the safety of pork, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). As with any raw meat, pork should always be properly handled and cooked to eliminate a range of food safety concerns.

What is swine influenza?

Swine influenza is a contagious respiratory disease of pigs. The disease is commonly seen in North and South America, Asia and Europe. Illness is caused by Type A Influenza viruses, which also affect a range of other animals, as well as humans.

Influenza viruses are commonly detected in pigs, which can become infected by humans, birds or other pigs. The transfer of influenza from pigs to humans is rare and usually involves close contact with sick animals. However, the CFIA is following a highly precautionary approach to minimize potential human and animal health risks, no matter how remote they may be. All appropriate measures will be taken to prevent any potential virus dissemination during the operation.

The CFIA is working with its provincial and territorial counterparts to monitor swine herds and to encourage producers to maintain strict disease prevention measures.

What are the symptoms in pigs?

Further research is needed to determine how H1N1 Flu Virus (Human Swine Influenza) affects pigs but influenza viruses typically seen in swine cause the following symptoms:

- fever
- loss of appetite
- weight loss
- coughing
- sneezing
- nasal discharge
- difficulty breathing
- reduced fertility or abortion

How can pigs be protected?

The following actions can potentially prevent swine influenza:

- vaccinating animals,
- ensuring farm workers maintain good hygiene,
- following strict biosecurity practices,
- providing adequate ventilation in barns, and
- identifying and segregating sick animals as early as possible.

What precautions should producers take to limit the risk of introducing and spreading disease?

Traffic control:

- Anyone exhibiting signs of respiratory illness should avoid contact with animals.
- Workers in swine facilities who have been exposed to influenza or someone diagnosed with influenza should avoid contact with animals until they have been checked by a healthcare worker.
- Avoid contact with swine outside regular employment.
- Control and restrict visitors' access to the herd.
- Require all visitors to wear clean boots, clothing and gloves and wash hands thoroughly on entry and exit.
- Prevent other animals from coming into contact with the herd.
- Maintain records of the movement of people, animals and equipment on and off the premises.

Isolation:

- Only obtain new animals from reputable sources and limit the frequency of introducing new pigs to the herd.
- House newborn, weaned, feeder, and breeding pigs separately.
- Move pigs in groups during each production stage, in an all-in-all-out manner.

Sanitation:

- Routinely clean and disinfect buildings, barns, equipment, clothing and footwear.
- Designate a cleaning area for vehicles and equipment.
- Promptly dispose of dead pigs in a manner that minimizes the chance of spread of any disease.
- Implement a manure management program.
- Avoid borrowing equipment and vehicles from other farms.

Herd health management:

- Monitor herd health daily and employ veterinary services.
- Uniquely identify all animals for traceability.
- In consultation with a veterinarian, consider vaccinating animals.
- Isolate sick pigs and immediately report any signs of illness to your veterinarian or the nearest CFIA office.

Program maintenance:

- Train all staff on your biosecurity program and monitor its effectiveness.
- Be aware of any diseases in your area and adjust your biosecurity program accordingly.
- Recommend farm workers discuss an annual flu vaccination with their doctor.
(Vaccination may reduce the amounts of virus shed if infected during human influenza outbreaks, and limit the potential for human influenza virus infection of pigs. The effectiveness of current human vaccines against this new strain is not known at this time.)

What precautions should veterinarians take when investigating respiratory illnesses in swine?

The CFIA recommends that veterinarians:

- prepare and plan the visit by contacting the producer beforehand;
- park in designated areas or as far as possible from animals;
- keep a log book of farms visited;
- use appropriate personal protective equipment:
 - N95 masks, gloves, impermeable coveralls, protective clothing and footwear and eye protection;
- wash hands thoroughly after handling animals;
- leave as you arrived and clean and sanitize vehicles and equipment;
- dispose of protective equipment in a safe manner:
 - either leave it on the farm to be appropriately disposed or
 - remove it and place it in “contaminated materials” containers for transport to the office;
- prioritize work by attending low-risk jobs first and then observe animals for concerns; and
- avoid or minimize contact with manure storage, feed supplies, and water supplies.

Until more is known about how this illness affects swine, if swine influenza is suspected – do not travel to another swine farm for 48 hours.

For more detailed information on biosecurity measures recommended for disease investigation farm visits please contact your local CFIA office.

(<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/directory/offbure.shtml>)

For additional information:

www.inspection.gc.ca

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