

HEALTH ALERT

Office of Developmental Programs

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Office of the Medical Director

SWINE FLU SUMMER 2012

Between July 12 and August 9, 2012 a total of 153 cases of infections with a new swine flu called H3N2v were reported in Indiana (120 cases), Ohio (31), Hawaii (one) and Illinois (one)¹. Pennsylvania DOH has identified four confirmed and six probable illnesses due to this variant influenza A (H3N2) (referred to as H3N2v).² Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory illness that is caused by a type A influenza that can cause outbreaks in pigs but rarely results in death. When influenza types occur in swine, they are referred to as swine influenza. When an influenza type commonly found in swine infects humans, it is referred to as a *virus variant*. It is generally distinguished by adding a v to the influenza type: H3N2v.

Swine influenza does not normally occur in humans, but sporadic cases have occurred. Most often they have been associated with exposure to pigs. The 10 H3N2v cases in Pennsylvania occurred among a group visiting the Huntingdon County Fair that took place August 5 – 11, 2012. As of August 17, 2012, an additional 71 cases have been reported in the US including those from Pennsylvania. The illnesses associated with this H3N2v have the symptoms typical of influenza, have been mild and have not been associated with hospitalizations.

During this time of year many agricultural fairs take place throughout Pennsylvania. It is at these events where the H3N2v virus has passed from pigs to people. However, to date, there has been no evidence of the virus passing from person-to-person. The PA DOH continues to investigate

¹ Evaluation of Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests for Influenza A (H3N2) v Virus and Updated Case Count – United States, 2012. MMWR/August 17, 2012, Vol. 61, No. 32 P. 619.

² When the influenza viruses circulate in swine, it is referred to as swine influenza but is called a variant virus when isolated from humans.

secondary spread. The possibility of similar illnesses occurring where swine are being exhibited remains.

PREVENTION - WAYS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFLUENZA VIRUSES BETWEEN PIGS AND PEOPLE

- Persons visiting swine exhibits at agricultural affairs need to practice good hand hygiene. Good hand hygiene means washing hands thoroughly with warm soapy water after visiting swine exhibits, after bathroom use and before eating meals. Use an alcohol rub if soap and water aren't available. Many fairs are making the alcohol hand cleaners available on site at the swine exhibits.
- Do NOT bring food or beverages into areas where swine are being displayed.
- Avoid people if they are sick or exhibiting flu-like symptoms.
- Persons who are experiencing flu-like symptoms need to take protective measures - always cover coughs and sneezes, and wash hands often.
- Persons who are at high risk for complications from influenza: i.e., children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions (like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions) **should consider avoiding visiting swine exhibits at agricultural affairs or having any contact with swine**, especially if sick pigs have been identified.

IF SWINE INFLUENZA IS SUSPECTED

Signs and symptoms of seasonal influenza illness include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and fatigue. Illness can range from mild to severe. Although most cases reported to date have been mild and resolved without treatment, hospitalizations and even death can occur.

- Health care providers should consider anyone presenting with flu symptoms for a diagnosis of swine influenza especially if they had contact with swine or visited an agricultural fair prior to illness onset.
- If you develop these symptoms especially after visiting the pig exhibit at a fair, you should contact your health care provider.

A seasonal flu vaccine will not protect people against H3N2v, but there are influenza antiviral drugs that can treat human H3N2v illness if it is severe. Treatment of flu with antiviral medications is generally only used for those at high risk exhibiting influenza-like symptoms. Early antiviral treatment is most effective for treating influenza.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)

www.flu.gov

CDC - Interim Guidance for Influenza Outbreak Management in Long-Term Care Facilities:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/ltc-facility-guidance.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/h3n2v-fairs-factsheet.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/influenza-variant-viruses-h3n2v.htm>

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1216208&mode=2>