



Fact Sheet

SWINE INFLUENZA – ADVICE FOR VETERINARIANS AND SWINE PRODUCERS

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has been notified of cases of human swine influenza (swine flu) in the southern United States and Mexico. Information to date indicates that human-to-human transmission of the virus has occurred. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is currently coordinating the Canadian response to this situation, and the CFIA is providing support and expertise as required. For more information, visit <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca>.

At this point, there are no signs of increased disease or death in Canadian swine. However, as a precaution, the CFIA is asking producers, veterinarians and labs to increase their vigilance in monitoring for and reporting swine disease. Suspected cases of illness in pigs should be reported to veterinarians, provincial authorities or the CFIA. Similarly, PHAC recommends that anyone who is experiencing severe flu-like symptoms contact their health care provider.

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.

Are humans affected by swine influenza?

Yes, but human cases of swine influenza are normally uncommon. Most often, cases involve people who have had close contact with pigs, such as farmers and veterinarians. Some cases of human-to-human transmission have been reported. Symptoms of human illness are similar to regular flu: cough, nausea, body aches, fatigue, runny nose and congestion.

Although the risk of human illness is low, anyone having contact with pigs or potentially contaminated equipment should thoroughly wash their hands and limit contact with possibly infected pigs.

Swine, avian and human influenza viruses can combine within pig cells to form new influenza viruses. Flu-like symptoms in swine or people that may have had contact with swine should be reported to animal or public health professionals. Doing so will allow health authorities to maintain a current understanding of the viruses circulating in the animal and human populations.

What are the symptoms in pigs?

Signs of swine influenza include the following:

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

Swine influenza generally does not lead to death, and affected animals usually recover within five to seven days.

How do pigs become infected?

Normally, virus spreads when infected pigs cough or sneeze in close quarters with other pigs. Contaminated equipment or other objects may also play a role in transmitting virus. Influenza virus from birds and humans can also infect pigs.

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
- identifying and segregating sick animals as early as possible

What roles do veterinarians and producers play?

Veterinarians should work closely with clients to develop management strategies to limit the incidence and spread of swine influenza. As part of this approach, veterinarians suffering from the “flu” should limit contact with pigs, and farm workers should follow similar advice. Given the current situation, particular caution should be exercised with visitors to farms, especially those who may have recently returned from the southern United States or Mexico.

Does swine influenza affect food safety?

No, swine influenza is not a food safety concern.

For additional information:

www.inspection.gc.ca

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