

Manitoba News Release

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April 26, 2009

PROVINCE CONTINUES TO MONITOR
SEVERE RESPIRATORY ILLNESS, SWINE INFLUENZA

The Office of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer advises that provincial officials are continuing to work with Manitoba health-care providers and regional health authorities to watch for cases of severe respiratory illness (i.e., respiratory illness that requires hospital care) in Manitoba, especially in travellers returning from Mexico.

To date, there have been no reported cases of severe respiratory illness in Manitoba associated with travel in Mexico or the United States.

As usual, individuals who currently have symptoms of a severe respiratory illness (fever, new or increasing cough or shortness of breath) should contact their health-care provider. Any travel history should be provided to the health-care provider.

As with any infectious respiratory disease, Manitobans are encouraged to use routine precautionary measures.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to reduce the spread of germs.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued travel health notices about swine flu in Mexico, California and Texas. For more information, visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/pub-eng.php.

For links to more information, visit the website at www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth. For health questions or more information on respiratory illness, Manitobans can phone Health Links-Info Santé at 788-8200 or toll-free at 1-888-315-9257.

April 27, 2009

AGRICULTURAL ASPECTS OF SWINE INFLUENZA

- Influenza viruses can infect a number of species of animals and people. Poultry, pigs and people are commonly infected with horses and dogs occasionally

being infected. Each strain of influenza virus seems to prefer one type of host, but these viruses can change and jump to a new host species.

- Swine Influenza in pigs is a reportable disease in Manitoba but not on a federal level. To date, there have been no reports of animals with swine influenza in Manitoba.

- The influenza reported in Mexico and the United States is a new variant of the H1N1 influenza virus and has genetic coding from swine, poultry and human influenza viruses.

- Manitoba's Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) is leading the surveillance component of the national Canadian Animal Health Surveillance Network. This network will be used to co-ordinate influenza surveillance in animals across Canada. Manitoba has pioneered work in creating a tool to analyze routine submissions to vet labs and create disease profiles.

- The CVO has provided veterinarians and Manitoba pork producers with information related to this swine flu situation.

- The Office of the CVO is working with Manitoba Health and Healthy Living and other government departments to manage the risks to humans and to pigs.

- Since 2006, over 7,350 DNA tests and over 26,460 blood tests for swine influenza surveillance were done in Manitoba.

While influenza can occur as naturally in pigs as in humans, the chance of mortality remains low. Any cases of respiratory illness/disease in pigs should be investigated by a veterinarian.

- Swine producers are encouraged to maintain biosecurity measures in their production facilities to reduce the risk of introducing an influenza virus to their livestock.

- Biosecurity is a process for controlling the spread of infectious and organic disease. A biosecurity program reduces/prevents:

- the introduction of new diseases, and

- the spread of diseases on farms and ranches and between neighbouring farms and ranches.

- Biosecurity practices include washing and disinfecting hands and clothing and footwear used in production areas. To minimize the opportunity for influenza to pass from people to pigs, or from pigs to people, anyone suffering from flu-like illness should avoid contact with swine.