



Arkansas Department of Health

4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000

Governor Mike Beebe

Paul K. Halverson, DrPH, FACHE, Director and State Health Officer

Swine Influenza H1N1 Situation in US and AR

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In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Other U.S. states have reported cases of swine flu infection in humans and cases have been reported internationally as well. An updated case count of confirmed swine flu infections in the United States is kept at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm> CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation. At this time, there are no cases in Arkansas. Since the situation is changing so rapidly, while 11 states currently have cases this could change at any time.

In response to an intensifying outbreak in the United States and internationally caused by a new influenza virus of swine origin, the World Health Organization raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 5 on April 29, 2009. A Phase 5 alert is a "strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short."

There is no animal disease reported with this new virus. At this time, there is no evidence of disease in swine, although Departments of Agriculture all over the country, including here in Arkansas, have increased their surveillance for this disease. There is no evidence that swine influenza can be transmitted through food. Eating properly cooked pork and pork products is safe. This currently is a human disease, and the reality is that there is more risk of a person giving this virus to a pig than vice versa.

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. H1N1 and H3N2 swine flu viruses are endemic among pig populations in many countries and something that the industry deals with routinely. Outbreaks among pigs normally occur in colder weather months (late fall and winter) and sometimes with the introduction of new pigs into susceptible herds. In the US, studies have shown that between 30 and 50 percent of the pig population has been exposed to H1N1 infection at some time (CDC, 2009). People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

As far as we know right now, there is no risk for sick people giving this to their pets, but the potential always exists for influenza viruses to be able to cross species and infect another species. If a person has this new disease H1N1, it would be prudent for them to limit animal contact, just as they limit contact with other people.

Situation Update:

- The list of states with the numbers of people who are confirmed cases is updated daily at 11am at www.cdc.gov/swineflu.
- Influenza is always serious – each year, in the United States, seasonal influenza results, on average, in an estimated 36,000 deaths from flu-related causes.
- Because this is a new virus, most people will not have immunity to it and so illness may be more severe and widespread as a result.
- Based on the rapid spread of the virus thus far, we believe that more cases will be identified over the coming weeks and months.
- New guidance is being issued continuously. I urge to you visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/> for more information or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.
- This is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance should be considered

Animal Owners:

- Currently there is not enough information to fully assess the health implications of this novel strain of flu virus for animals. There is no evidence at this time that swine in the US are infected with this flu virus strain.
- It is very unlikely that dogs, cats, or horses would become infected with this virus. It may be possible for a pet monkey (nonhuman primate) and for pet swine to become infected with this new virus from a human.

Public:

- There is no vaccine available right now to protect against this virus, but the process has begun to get a vaccine developed.
- Influenza antiviral drugs are an important weapon in our arsenal against influenza.
- Many people believe that there is no treatment for a viral infection and that it must run its course. That is not true.
- Influenza antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) with activity against influenza viruses, including swine influenza viruses.
- Influenza antiviral drugs work best when stated soon after illness onset (within two 2 days), but treatment with antiviral drugs should *still be considered after 48 hours of symptom onset, particularly for hospitalized patients or people at high risk for influenza-related complications.*
- Take these everyday steps to protect your health:
 - 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 hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- **Do not go to work or school if you are sick.** CDC recommends that you limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- If you don't have one yet, consider developing a family emergency plan as a precaution. This should include storing a supply of extra food, medicines, facemasks and other essential supplies.

Resources:

www.healthyarkansas.com

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

www.usda.gov

www.pork.org

Susan Weinstein

State Public Health Veterinarian

(501) 280-4136