

“Swine Influenza”/Novel Influenza Virus A Statement and Q&A

Final Draft – 29 April 2009

Animal Health Industry statement regarding swine influenza in pigs and the current outbreak in humans of Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1):

Statement and key messages:

The current spread among humans of the so-called ‘swine flu’, more aptly named the Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1):

The current outbreak of the human disease, first reported in Mexico, is caused by a reassorted influenza A virus, type H1N1, known as the novel influenza virus A. This virus is different from the swine influenza virus found in pigs.

The current strain of this Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1), commonly referred to as “Mexican flu” and “North-American flu”, is transmitted from person to person. There are no food-safety issues related to this Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1). It cannot be passed to humans through food, by eating properly cooked pork or pork products. In general, the influenza virus A is killed by temperatures of 160°F/70°C, by proper hygiene measures and by common disinfectants.

For further information on human health issues related to the Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1) please check out the following websites: WHO - <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>), US CDC – Centres for Disease Control <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>, and the ECDC – European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/>.

Swine influenza in pigs

Swine influenza in general is a respiratory disease affecting pigs caused by type A influenza viruses with low mortality rates amongst pigs. It can – on rare occasions – spread to humans and give transient human flu-type symptoms. There is no one tool that will combat the disease in pigs, but a combination of good management practices, good hygiene and vaccinations can help combat swine flu among pigs.

- Vaccines containing type A swine influenza viruses and subtypes H1N1 and H3N2, are available and induce a strong protective immune response in vaccinated pigs.
- There is no evidence that swine influenza can be passed to humans through food, by eating pork or pork products. The swine influenza virus is killed by cooking at temperatures of 160°F/70°C, corresponding to the general guidance for the preparation of pork and other meat.
- The Animal Health Industry is constantly monitoring the situation, but has not been notified of any increased swine influenza among pigs at this point in time, nor of any occurrence of the Novel Influenza Virus A (H1N1) among pigs.
- Alert levels have been increased in pig facilities, specific biosecurity measures have been put in place, and companies are remaining vigilant and working with authorities to help minimise any spread of the virus or introduction into the swine population. Companies have instigated response and preparedness plans.

Q&A related to Swine Influenza in particular

Q1. What is swine flu?

A1. Swine influenza is a respiratory disease in pigs caused by one of several type A influenza viruses. Mortality rates amongst pigs tends to be low (1-4%). Most commonly swine influenza viruses are of the H1N1 or H3N2 subtypes, but there are other subtypes circulating too. Pigs can also be infected with avian influenza viruses and with human seasonal influenza viruses, and can sometimes be infected with more than one virus at the same time, which allow genes from different viruses to mix, called a 'reassortant virus'.

Although swine influenza viruses are normally species-specific and only infect pigs, they may on rare occasions cause disease in humans, but it is not common.

Q2. How does the current disease in humans first reported in Mexico relate to swine flu?

A2. The current outbreak of human disease, first reported in Mexico is caused by a reassorted influenza A virus, type H1N1. This novel influenza virus has so far not been found in pigs.

Q3. What are the symptoms of swine influenza in pigs?

A3. Symptoms may include coughing (or "barking"), discharge from the nose, fever sneezing, breathing difficulties, off their food.

Q4. How does swine influenza spread among pigs?

A4. It is mostly spread through airborne droplets (e.g. sneezing, coughing), direct and indirect contact among pigs, or with contaminated objects moving between infected and uninfected pigs. Outbreaks in pigs occur all year round, with an increase in occurrence in autumn/winter. Many countries routinely vaccinate swine populations against swine influenza. The OIE has indicated that studies must be carried out to see how the Novel Influenza Virus A affects pigs, and if necessary to implement bio-security measures and possible vaccination to protect susceptible animals.

Q5. How is the disease prevented/managed in pigs?

A5. There is no one tool that will combat the disease, but a combination of good management practices, good hygiene and vaccinations can help combat swine flu among pigs.

Q6. Can humans catch swine flu from eating pork or eating any pig-by products?

A6. There is no evidence that swine influenza can be passed to humans through food, by eating pork or pork products. The swine influenza virus is killed by cooking at temperatures of 160°F/70°C, corresponding to the general guidance for the preparation of pork and other meat.

Q7. Which countries have been affected by outbreaks in pigs?

A7. The international distribution is not clearly known, but outbreaks have been known to occur in the past across the globe.

Tips on what you can do can be found on the website of the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

More information regarding swine flu and human health can be found on the website of the **WHO**: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html> and of the **ECDC**: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/>

More information on swine influenza can be found on the website of the **OIE**: http://www.oie.int/eng/press/en_090427.html