

Biosecurity recommendations for producers

The strain of influenza virus type H1N1 previously reported to cause illness only in humans recently has been found in pigs in one farm in Alberta, Canada. The pigs are thought to have been infected by one of the workers on the farm. The virus caused mild illness in the Canadian herd, and the pigs are recovering.

Before this case was reported, this strain of H1N1 flu virus had never been seen in pigs. However, this situation confirms that human-to-pig transmission of the virus is possible and serves as a reminder for U.S. pork producers and veterinarians to take precautions to protect the U.S. swine herd. The National Pork Board is urging pork producers and veterinarians to:

- Step up on-farm biosecurity practices to prevent the H1N1 virus from entering their swine herds;
- Remain vigilant, carefully monitoring the health of their pigs to prevent the virus from spreading if it enters a production system.

Producers also are asked to follow the recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent further spread of the virus.

Ensure Biosecurity Measures are in Place

To prevent the introduction of the new strain of influenza virus H1N1 into your operation, follow good biosecurity practices. Because people have been reported sick with this virus and because the only report verifying that the virus can cause illness in pigs – the case described above in Alberta, Canada – describes an ill farm worker passing the virus to pigs, your biosecurity practices should place special emphasis on protecting your animals from humans potentially carrying the virus.

Consider the following practices:

1. Limit the number of people you allow into your pork production operation.

- Limit the entry of people into your facility to workers and essential service personnel.
- Prevent international visitors from entering your facilities.
- Prevent the entry of people who have traveled, especially to or from regions or countries where the virus has been reported, as recently as in the past two weeks.

2. Develop and implement an enhanced biosecurity protocol for workers, service personnel and all other people entering your facility.

- Do not allow people exhibiting flu-like symptoms to enter your facility, ask them to report recent international travel or report contact with others who have developed signs of illness.
- If people who have developed illness, report international travel or report contact with others who have developed illness are essential to the operation and must

enter the facilities, enforce their use of properly fitted, valveless N95 respirators, gloves and other personal protective equipment (PPE) while on the farm and limit their contact with the animals.

- Implement a shower-in, shower-out policy for all people entering the facility, where possible. If not possible, ensure that all people entering the facility wash their hands and arms with warm water and soap before entering the facility.
- Enforce the use of farm-specific clothing and footwear for all people entering the facility.
- Encourage all people to wash their hands and arms frequently while on-farm, including before and after handling pigs, before eating, smoking or touching their faces, mouths, eyes or noses.
- Encourage all people to use hand sanitizer following hand-washing.

3. Establish, implement and enforce strict sick leave policies for workers who have developed influenza-like symptoms, such as a fever, cough, body aches and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

- Prevent workers exhibiting these symptoms from entering swine facilities for at least seven days after presenting with signs of respiratory illness, even mild ones.
- Recommend that workers with these symptoms be seen immediately by a medical provider.
- Encourage workers to report if members of their household develop influenza-like symptoms or have been diagnosed with influenza. Consider restricting the contact that these workers have with the animals.
- If workers reporting international travel develop influenza-like symptoms, restrict their access to the farm. Recommend that they seek immediate medical attention and that they report their travel to the medical professional.

4. Follow industry-accepted biosecurity practices, including:

- **Enforce basic hygiene practices.**
- **Pay attention to ventilation.** Ventilation systems in production facilities should be designed to minimize re-circulation of air inside animal housing facilities. This is important to reduce the exposure of pigs to viruses from other pigs and to reduce their exposure to human influenza viruses.
- **Implement and enforce the use of personal protective equipment.** Provide basic personal protective equipment (PPE) to the people working in barns. This should include face masks, or preferably respirators; eye protection and gloves when appropriate.
- **Recommend that all workers are vaccinated against the seasonal influenza virus.** The vaccine is produced on a yearly basis and contains only human, not swine, strains of influenza viruses. Vaccination of swine farm workers will help to prevent human infections from seasonal human influenza strains. Seasonal influenza vaccination will not protect against the new H1N1 strain. However, vaccination of farm workers will reduce the amounts of viruses they shed if

infected during seasonal human influenza outbreaks and limit the potential for human influenza virus infection of pigs.

- **Review herd health programs with your veterinarian to ensure they are up to date and effective for conditions on your farm**

Remain vigilant

Producers and their employees should remain vigilant of the health of the animals in their care. The routine practice of daily observation will allow producers and their employees to assess the health of the animals on the farm and all of the animals transported to other sites or the market.

If you observe or employees report respiratory illness in pigs, pigs going off-feed or pigs developing a fever, contact a swine veterinarian immediately. Rapid detection of the illness may help reduce the spread of the virus to other herds.

Prompt confirmation of an H1N1 flu virus diagnosis on a farm will likely require that specimens or tissue samples be sent to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory. This must be done by a veterinarian or under direction of a veterinarian.

If you contact a veterinarian to report a suspicious outbreak on your farm:

- Describe the flu-like symptoms you have observed in the pigs.
- Describe the number and age/weight of the pigs affected.
- Inform the veterinarian if the animals affected have received or are receiving any type of animal health product or treatment.
- Report if anybody who has had contact with the animals has reported or has developed influenza-like symptoms.

If tissue samples or swabs are required, ensure that all people conducting the collection use personal protective equipment, including a properly fitted, valveless N95 respirator, gloves and safety goggles. Ensure that the information provided to your veterinarian also is relayed to the veterinary diagnostic laboratory.

Once again, producers also are asked to follow the recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent further spread of the virus.