

Issues Alert #6
Situation update on Influenza A/H1N1) virus

1. Key Issues

- **An Canadian Swine Herd under investigation for H1N1 flu virus - status unchanged**
- **Thailand bans imports of Australian pork and offal**
- **Australian Department of Health and Aging now officially refer to H1N1 influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)**
- **WHO Alert remains unchanged at Phase 5**
- **No confirmed local Australian cases**
- **Greater vigilance biosecurity on-farm remains critical**

2. Latest Developments

- **An Alberta Swine Herd Investigated for H1N1 flu virus is still under quarantine awaiting further test results** – The Canadian Food Inspection Agency issued a news release on 3 May advising that preliminary testing conducted by the agency suggests the presence of H1N1 flu virus in a swine herd in Alberta. Preliminary testing conducted by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) indicates the presence of H1N1 flu virus in about 220 pigs in a swine herd of 2200 in Alberta. The pigs were likely exposed to the virus from an individual who had recently returned from Mexico and had been exhibiting flu-like symptoms on April 24 2009 (prior to the biosecurity announcements). Signs of illness were subsequently observed in the pigs. All pigs have since recovered or are recovering. The herd has been placed under quarantine, and the CFIA is working with public health colleagues to determine the most appropriate next steps to ensure that public and animal health remain protected. The chance that these pigs could transfer virus to a person is remote. Influenza viruses do not affect the safety of pork, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- **Thailand bans Australian imports of pork and offal** – APL is liaising with AQIS on the issue and we have been assured it is a top priority for their office and are striving to correct it. AQIS is aware that Thailand is an important offal market for the industry and the impact of this ban.
- **Australia now officially refers to the disease as H1N1 influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)** – Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry advise that the Department of Health and Aging is changing their official communications concerning the virus to “H1N1 influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)”.
- **Smithfield Foods** – Smithfield reaffirmed on 3 May 2009 that there is no evidence of the swine flu in any of its swine herds or employees at its facilities.
- **International cases of H1N1 influenza a** - As of 18:00 GMT, 5 May 2009, the WHO stated that the situation continues to evolve reporting has reported 21 (previously 18 countries) have officially reported 1085 cases of Influenza A H1N1 infection.



P O R K S A F E N O T I C E

- **Egypt culls pig herd**– Authorities press on with a nationwide slaughter of the country’s pigs to prevent virus transmission, despite protests and despite evidence that consumption of pork meat or that pigs can transmit the virus
- **Malaysia** – The Veterinary Services Department will vaccinate all 1.7 million pigs in the country to prevent the risk of viruses from mutating into a different strain. However, the vaccines will not protect pigs from the Influenza A H1N1 strain infecting humans.
- **China** – has banned pork imports from Alberta, Canada after reports of herd infection in a pig herd. The decision made by China’s AQSIQ, ‘to protect the security of China’s animal husbandry and the health of its people.’ Canada has strongly criticised this decision and may take pursue action at the WTO.
- **WHO Alert Phase 5 remains unchanged.** Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 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.
- **No Australian cases confirmed:** Still no local Australian cases confirmed; 52 suspect cases as of 6am, 5 May 2009, Australian Eastern Standard Time.

3. Key Messages

- Pork is safe to eat. It is impossible to contract Influenza A/H1N1 from eating pork and pork related products.
- There is a possible case of H1N1 affecting a pig herd in Canada. Preliminary testing conducted by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) suggests the presence of H1N1 flu virus in the herd which seems to have been exposed to the virus from an individual who had recently returned from Mexico and had been exhibiting flu-like symptoms.
- In the reported case in Canada both the farm worker and the animals are recovering.
- Influenza A/H1N1 continues to be a human health issue. The World Health Organisation says there is no evidence pigs are passing this disease to humans. Rather it appears the other way around as is the case in Canada.
- There is no connection between pork and pork products and this disease.
- It is important for Australian consumers to know that the Australian pig herd does not have this virus. However, even in the case of the flu entering the country it would still not be possible to contract the flu through consumption of pork and pork related products.
- Australia has strict quarantine protocols in place to ensure the likelihood of ANY disease getting into Australia is averted. The industry has already rigorous biosecurity on farm. However in a situation like this APL calls on all pork farmers to be vigilant.
- APL continues to work closely with the relevant authorities and monitors this situation closely.

4. Greater vigilance for On-Farm Biosecurity On-Farm Remains Critical!

Given the situation in Canada, it is critical that Australian Pork Producers implement continue with stringent herd biosecurity routines to protect against any disease incursion. APL recommends that until advised you also undertake the following:



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- *To prevent person-to-animal transmission*
- Exclude contact between pigs and people with any sign of fever or flu-like symptoms
- Exclude contact between pigs and people that have returned from overseas travel within the last 7 -10 days, especially those that have visited the Americas
- See APL’s Enhanced Biosecurity Alert available from APL website <http://www.australianpork.com.au/pages/page140.asp>
- APL’s website provides alert messages and useful links <http://www.australianpork.com.au/pages/page140.asp>

5. Media Coverage

- There has been some preliminary reporting of this issue in the media, although most international coverage was limited to reports of new cases and government and institutional responses to H1N1 flu’s spread.
- Australian media attention to the issue continues to wane, and the news that some pigs in Canada now have the disease has not had very broad media coverage.
- For information on media are encouraged to look at the APL website in case of new information or updates: <http://www.australianpork.com.au/pages/page141.asp>

Other contacts

- **Swine Influenza Hotline:** 1802007 - For the general public and people returning from the Americas with flu-like symptoms.
- **Emergency Animal Disease Watch** hotline - Producers are encouraged to check their properties regularly and if they see anything unusual to call 1800 675 888.

Other information

- **APL website** - <http://www.australianpork.com.au/pages/page140.asp> - For more information and updates on Swine Flu
- **Animal Health Australia** - <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/>
- **Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer** - <http://www.daff.gov.au/animal-plant-health/animal>

PorkSAFE (Australian Pork Emergency Response Plan); Incident Control Team

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