

DPHHS HAN ADVISORY



Cover Sheet

DATE: August 10, 2012

SUBJECT: Influenza A (H3N2) Variant Virus (H3N2v)

INSTRUCTIONS:

DISTRIBUTE to your local HAN contacts. This HAN is intended for general sharing of information. **Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own.**

For LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT reference only

DPHHS Subject Matter Resource for more information regarding this HAN, contact:

**DPHHS CDCP
Epidemiology Section
1-406-444-0273**

**DPHHS Health Alert Hotline:
1-800-701-5769**

**DPHHS HAN Website:
www.han.mt.gov**

Remove this cover sheet before redistributing and replace it with your own.

Please ensure that DPHHS is included on your HAN distribution list.

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

Please call DPHHS to update contact information at 444-0919

Information Sheet

Date: August 10, 2012

Subject: Influenza A (H3N2) Variant Virus (H3N2v)

Information:

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is closely monitoring reports of an influenza A H3N2 variant virus (H3N2v) in several states. To date, no cases have been identified in Montana or neighboring states. As of August 9, 2012, 145 cases of H3N2v have been detected with the majority of those cases occurring within the last month. To date, there have been 113 cases in Indiana, 1 case each in Hawaii and Illinois and 30 in Ohio. Investigations into the human cases revealed infections with these viruses following contact with swine as well as some limited human-to-human transmission.

It's possible that sporadic infections and even localized outbreaks among people with this virus will continue to occur. While there is no evidence at this time that sustained human-to-human transmission is occurring, all influenza viruses have the capacity to change and it's possible that this virus may become widespread. So far, the severity of illnesses associated with this virus in people has been similar to the severity of illnesses associated with seasonal flu virus infections. Limited serologic studies indicate that adults may have some pre-existing immunity to this virus while children do not. CDC is closely monitoring human infections with all novel influenza viruses, including H3N2v viruses, and will provide more information as it becomes available.

The Montana Public Health Laboratory has the RT-PCR testing capability to detect and confirm the H3N2v influenza virus.

Recommended Actions:

Public Health Agencies: please emphasize the following messages and distribute information to venues where animal contact may occur (county fairs, etc.):

- Persons who are at high risk for influenza complications should consider avoiding exposure to pigs and swine barns this summer, especially if ill pigs have been identified.
- Individuals engaging in activities that involve swine contact, whether directly or indirectly, should wash their hands frequently and avoid eating or drinking in animal areas. Swine that appear ill should be avoided in particular.
- Individuals with flu-like symptoms who have recently been in close proximity to swine should see their physician or health care provider.
- Influenza viruses have NOT been shown to be transmitted to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork products.

Health Care Providers:

- Clinicians who suspect influenza in persons with recent exposure to swine should obtain a nasopharyngeal swab or aspirate from the patient, place the swab or aspirate in viral transport medium, and submit promptly to the Montana Public Health Laboratory (MTPHL) for fee-waived testing.
- Report suspected and confirmed cases to local public health officials.
- The performance of rapid Influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) in detecting the Influenza H3N2v strain has not been well established. A person with influenza-like illness and swine exposure that tests negative with a RIDT should have a specimen referred to the MTPHL for RT-PCR testing.
- Reverse-transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing for influenza should be considered throughout the year for patients with influenza-like illness who report recent swine exposure and for those who can be epidemiologically linked to confirmed cases of variant influenza.
- RT-PCR testing for influenza should be considered for all patients with influenza-like illness prior to the start of the traditional influenza season in October.
- Clinicians should consider antiviral treatment with oral oseltamivir or inhaled zanamivir in patients with suspected or confirmed H3N2v virus infection. Antiviral treatment is most effective when started as soon as possible.

Additional Resources for Health Professionals are available at:

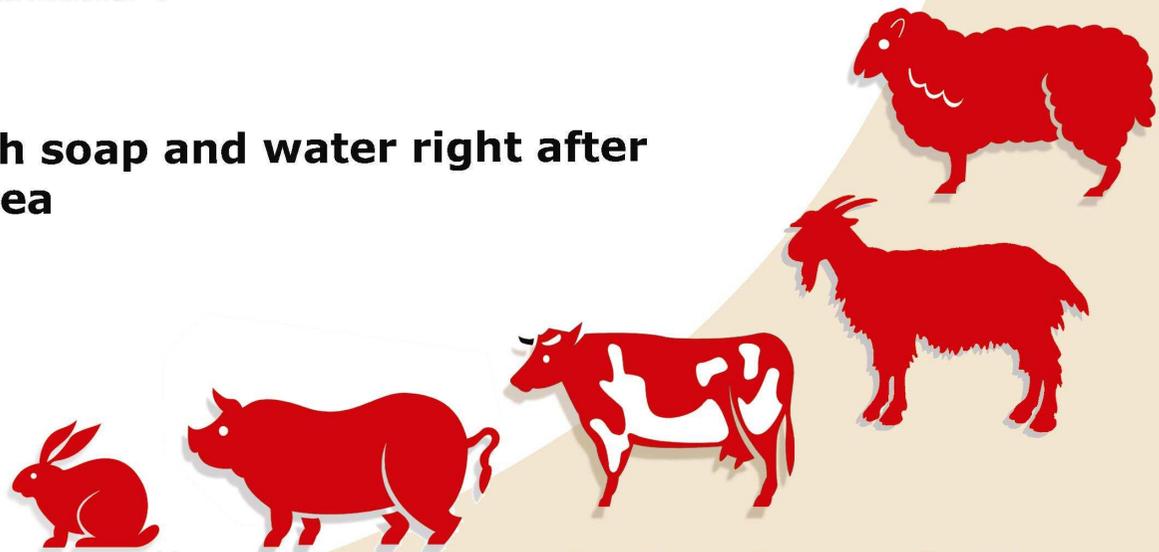
- [CDC Information on Influenza A \(H3N2\) variant viruses \(http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/influenza-variant-viruses-h3n2v.htm\)](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/influenza-variant-viruses-h3n2v.htm)

Know that animals carry germs that can make people sick

Never eat, drink, or put things into your mouth in animal areas

Older adults, pregnant women, and young children should be extra careful around animals

Wash your hands with soap and water right after visiting the animal area



How to be Safe Around Animals!



TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF FLU BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PIGS AT FAIRS

Pigs are commonly infected with swine influenza (swine flu) viruses that are usually different from human influenza viruses. While rare, influenza can spread from pigs to people and from people to pigs. When people get swine flu, it's usually after contact with pigs. This has happened in different settings, including fairs. Right now, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is concerned about a new influenza virus that has been found in U.S. pigs and has infected people too. This virus – called H3N2v when it infects people – may spread more easily to humans than is usual for swine flu viruses.

There are ways to reduce the spread of influenza viruses between pigs and people.

CDC recommends you:

- Wash your hands often with soap and running water before and after exposure to pigs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Never eat, drink or put things in your mouth in pig areas, and don't take food or drink into pig areas.
- Never take toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, baby bottles, strollers or similar items into pig areas.
- Avoid close contact with pigs that look or act ill.
- Avoid contact with pigs if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms. Avoid contact for 7 days after symptoms begin or until you have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.
- Watch your pigs for signs of illness and call a veterinarian if you suspect they might be sick.
- Children younger than 5 years, people 65 years and older, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions (like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions) are at high risk from serious complications if they get influenza. **These people should consider avoiding exposure to pigs and swine barns this fair season, especially if sick pigs have been identified.**
- Take appropriate protective measures if you must come in contact with pigs if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, or if you must be in the vicinity of pigs known or suspected to be infected with influenza viruses. Protective measures include wearing protective clothing, gloves, masks that cover your mouth and nose, and other personal protective equipment. Always cover coughs and sneezes, and wash your hands often.

A seasonal flu vaccine will not protect people against H3N2v, but there are influenza antiviral drugs that can treat human H3N2v illness as well as infection with seasonal influenza viruses. These antiviral drugs must be prescribed by a physician. Early antiviral treatment is most effective for treating influenza, so see a physician as soon as illness hits.

For more information:

Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-63548

Email: cdcinfo@cdc.gov Web: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/influenza-variant-viruses-h3n2v.htm>

August 9, 2012

National Center for Immunization & Respiratory Diseases
Influenza Division

