



Q&As

United States Department of Agriculture • Office of Communications • 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-1300 • Voice: (202) 720-4623 • Email: oc.news@usda.gov • Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

USDA Press Office: (202) 720-4623

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SWINE AND HUMAN CASES OF SWINE INFLUENZA A (H1N1)

Do any swine have the virus that has infected humans?

- There is no evidence at this time that swine in the United States are infected with this virus strain.

Can I get this new strain of virus from eating pork or pork products?

- According to USDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, no. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food so you cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills all viruses.
- The USDA suggests, as it has in the past, cooking pork and pork products to the proper internal temperature and preventing cross-contamination between raw and cooked food is the key to safety. You should:
 - Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw pork;
 - Prevent cross-contamination by keeping raw pork away from other foods;
 - After cutting raw meat, wash cutting board, knife, and countertops with hot, soapy water;
 - Sanitize cutting boards by using a solution of 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water; and
 - Use a food thermometer to ensure pork has reached the safe internal temperature of at least 160 °F to kill foodborne germs that might be present.

Can I get this flu by touching pork that is not yet cooked?

- There is no evidence at this time that the virus is in swine or that touching uncooked pork could infect someone with the virus.

What is this flu that people are talking about in the news?

- It is a new strain of flu that consists of a mixture of genetic material from swine, avian and human influenza viruses.

Is USDA testing and monitoring to make sure swine are not infected with the virus and if so, how?

- A network of Federal veterinarians, state animal health officials and private practitioners are regularly involved with monitoring U.S. swine for signs of significant disease.
- To date, there have been no reports that the influenza virus currently causing illness in humans is circulating anywhere in the U.S. swine herd.
- As a proactive measure, USDA is reaching out to all state animal health officials to affirm they have no signs of this virus type in their state.
- USDA has put U.S. pork producers on a high alert for safety.

How will the public be notified if the government finds that people should not eat swine?

- Delivering factual, timely information is a priority for USDA. Should there be a detection of influenza in the U.S. swine herd, those results would be shared with the public in a timely fashion.

Can you get this flu from being around or touching swine?

- The CDC says that the spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:
 - Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
 - Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu has been documented also and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Is my potbelly pig in danger? Can I get it from my pet?

- There is no evidence at this time that the virus is in U.S. swine.
- Swine owners should learn the warning signs of swine influenza. Signs of swine flu in pigs can include sudden onset of fever, depression, coughing (barking), discharge from the nose or eyes, sneezing, breathing difficulties, eye redness or inflammation, and going off feed. If your pig is showing any of these signs, call your veterinarian.
- Buy your animals from reputable sources and ensure that you have documentation of your new pet's origin. Be sure that you get your new animals checked by a veterinarian.
- Keep your pigs and areas around them clean. If you have been around other animals, make sure that you clean your shoes, clothing, and other items. And don't forget to wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling your pet.

How do we ensure that we take the appropriate measures to protect our swine?

- We encourage commercial pork producers to intensify the bio-security practices they've long had in place. They should not loan equipment or vehicles to or borrow them from other farms. Swine from outside sources, such as live bird markets should not be brought back to the farm.
- They should permit only essential workers and vehicles to enter the farm. Swine workers should disinfect their shoes, clothes and hands. They should thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and vehicles entering and leaving the farm and avoid visiting other poultry farms without proper cleaning and disinfection.
- Also, they should report sick animals immediately. The industry understands the importance of eradicating the virus as quickly as possible to protect the industry.

Is there a vaccine for humans for this new strain?

- The CDC should answer any questions about a vaccine. According to the CDC, there is no vaccine to protect humans from this new variant swine flu. Go to www.cdc.gov for more information.