

## **Human Influenza A (H1N1) virus and swine influenza in pigs: Statement and Q&A**

**Animal Health Industry statement regarding the human influenza A (H1N1) virus and swine influenza in pigs**

### **Statement and key messages**

#### **The current spread of the human Influenza A (H1N1) virus:**

The current outbreak of the human disease, first reported in Mexico in April 2009, is caused by a novel, reassorted influenza A virus, type H1N1, now known as the Influenza A (H1N1) virus. This virus is different from swine influenza viruses found in pigs, and it also contains genes from avian and human influenza viruses (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>).

The current strain of this Influenza A (H1N1) virus is transmitted from person to person.

For further information on human health issues related to the Influenza A (H1N1) virus 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/>
- ECDC – European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control <http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/>

There are no food-safety issues related to this Influenza A (H1N1) virus. It cannot be passed to humans through food, by eating properly cooked meat or meat products. In general, the influenza virus A is killed by temperatures of 160°F/70°C, by proper hygiene measures and by common disinfectants.

The virus was not apparent in pigs in Mexico during the initial outbreak in humans (see WHO). Scientific information available to the OIE (OIE press release on 30 April) and partner organisations indicates that the influenza A (H1N1) virus is being transmitted amongst humans primarily.

However the influenza A (H1N1) virus has meanwhile been found in pigs and turkeys. It is highly probable that the animals were exposed to the virus through farmers or farm workers. The safety of food, as explained above, is not affected and it continues to be safe to eat meat or meat products.

Alert levels have been increased in facilities of the Animal Health Industry; specific biosecurity measures have been put in place, and the Animal Health community remains vigilant and continues to work with authorities to help minimise the spread of the virus. Companies have instigated response and preparedness plans.

For more information regarding these latest developments, please visit the FAO website: <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/29532/icode/>

## 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 is not the same virus that is currently passing from human to human, and that was first reported in Mexico. 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 following the developments closely.
- For further information on biosecurity measures in general to avoid the spread of diseases, please consult the following websites:
  - EU Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health\\_consumer/dyna/consumervoice/create\\_cv.cfm?cv\\_id=490](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dyna/consumervoice/create_cv.cfm?cv_id=490)
  - OIE information on biosecurity measures: [http://www.oie.int/eng/Edito/en\\_edito\\_jun03.htm](http://www.oie.int/eng/Edito/en_edito_jun03.htm)
  - UN website: [http://un-influenza.org/objective\\_1](http://un-influenza.org/objective_1)

## 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 that contains genetic information from 2 different swine flu viruses, one avian flu virus and one human flu virus. (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>). Scientific information available to the OIE and partner organisations indicates that the influenza A (H1N1) virus is being transmitted amongst humans primarily. However the influenza A (H1N1) virus has been found in pigs and turkeys. It is highly probable that the animals were exposed to the virus through farmers or farm workers. The safety of food, however, is not affected and it continues to be safe to eat meat and meat products.

For more information regarding these latest developments, please visit the FAO website:  
<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/29532/icode/>

**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.

**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 influenza A (H1N1), human health and swine flu 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 influenza A (H1N1) and swine influenza can be found on the website of the OIE: [#">http://www.oie.int/eng/press/en\\_090427.html #](http://www.oie.int/eng/press/en_090427.html)

More information from the FAO:

<http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/29532/icode/>