

October 21, 2009

H1N1 Influenza

In response to the recent announcement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of a positive case of H1N1 Influenza in Minnesota swine, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) reiterates that pork is safe to eat and handle. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, flu viruses cannot be transmitted through food, including pork.

- People cannot get the H1N1 flu from eating pork. Pork and pork products remain safe to eat and handle.
- Scientific studies conducted by the USDA's Agriculture Research Service have shown that the H1N1 flu is a respiratory virus, not a food-borne illness, and it does not appear to be in the meat and blood of pigs exposed to the virus.
- The two most important steps to protect you and your family from the H1N1 flu are to wash your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

The TAHC plans to continue biosecurity outreach activities as well as support of the ongoing national surveillance effort. At present, there is no scientific reason for canceling livestock shows. There has been no evidence of novel H1N1 virus being transmitted from swine to people. Spread of the virus has been from people to people, and from people to swine. For this reason, the Texas Pork Producers Association and the Texas AgriLife Extension are urging all pork producers and youth exhibitors to tighten their biosecurity protocols to protect their pigs from contracting the virus.

Exercising good hygiene and employing common sense biosecurity practices will go a long way toward preventing the introduction and spread of influenza viruses.