



News Release

Arkansas Department of Health

For More Information Contact:
Office of Health Communications and Marketing
Ed Barham, (501) 280-4147

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Health Department Advisory About County Fairs and H3N2v Influenza Virus in Pigs

It's Safe to Go to the Fair—Just be Smart and Use Good Hygiene

(Little Rock)--This fair season, the Arkansas Department of Health is monitoring the occurrence of influenza caused by a specific H3N2v influenza virus that has been found in both people and pigs in a number of states. **Currently, there are no known cases of the disease associated with animals in Arkansas.** People can give the H3N2v influenza virus to other people but so far this season people infected with the disease have not spread it to other people. The majority of cases that are being seen nationwide have resulted from exhibitor contact or fair attendee contact with swine. Livestock inspectors have been cautioned to be proactive in determining illness in pigs.

With county fairs in full swing in Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Health wants to remind residents and visitors that fair attendance is safe.

Those attending the fair should remember:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and running water before and after exposure to animals.
- Never eat, drink or put things in your mouth in animal areas, and don't take food or drink into animal areas.
- Young children, pregnant women, people 65 and older and people with weakened immune systems should be extra careful around animals.
- If you have animals – especially swine – watch them for signs of illness and call a veterinarian if you suspect they might be sick.
- Avoid close contact with animals that look or act ill, when possible.
- Avoid contact with swine if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

Issues for Fair Organizers to Consider When Planning Fairs

Some simple precautions are effective in reducing the spread of the virus. These include:

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ADH – Fairs are Safe/Public Should Practice Good Hygiene

- Visitors to fairs and exhibitions, particularly to the animal barns with pigs, should receive information about disease risks and recommendations to protect visitors and animals from illness.
- Whenever possible, facilities should minimize human-animal contact.
- Take action to prevent the spread of flu viruses between pigs and people.

The risk of infection and spread of influenza viruses, including H3N2v, can be reduced by taking simple steps to reduce the risk of illness. The Health Department recommends the following for fair organizers:

Facility Recommendations

- Post signs or otherwise notify visitors that, for health reasons, to never eat or drink in animal areas and to wash their hands after leaving such an area.
- Persons with underlying medical conditions should be instructed not to have contact with pigs or to enter areas with pigs, especially if sick pigs have been identified.
- Instruct visitors not to eat, drink, smoke, place their hands in their mouth or use bottles or pacifiers while in areas with pigs.
- Instruct visitors not to carry toys, pacifiers, spill-proof cups, baby bottles, strollers or similar items into areas with pigs. (If possible, establish storage or holding areas for strollers and related items.)
- Instruct visitors to supervise children closely to discourage hand-to-mouth activities (e.g., nail-biting and thumb-sucking), and contact with soiled bedding. Children should not be allowed to sit or play on the ground in animal areas.
- Parents and children should be instructed to wash their hands after touching pigs or material contaminated by pigs. Instruct visitors that if children's hands become soiled, supervised hand washing should occur immediately.
- Control visitor traffic to prevent overcrowding.
- Provide accessible hand-washing stations for all visitors, including children and persons with disabilities.

At Special Risk:

- Children younger than age five, 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 during this fair season, especially if sick pigs have been identified.

For more information, click on www.healthy.arkansas.gov or www.cdc.gov or Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)/TTY: 1-888-232-63548

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