



KEY FACTS for People Exhibiting Pigs at Fairs

Who is at high risk of serious illness from variant virus infections?

People who are at high risk for serious complications (<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/index.htm>) from flu including variant flu viruses like H3N2v, include children younger than 5 years, people with certain long-term health conditions like asthma and other lung diseases, diabetes, heart disease, weakened immune systems, neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions, as well as pregnant women and people 65 years and older.

Most of the people hospitalized because of variant virus infections have had one of these factors that put them at risk.



Background

Pigs may be infected with swine influenza viruses that are different from human flu viruses. Swine flu viruses spread among pigs and – while rare – they can spread from pigs to people too. When that happens, these viruses are called variant viruses and are designated with the letter “v” after the virus subtype. Human infections with H1N1v, H3N2v and H1N2v viruses have been detected in the United States.

Spread of swine flu viruses from a pig to a person is thought to happen in the same way that human flu viruses spread, mainly through droplets when infected pigs cough or sneeze. This has happened in different settings, especially at fairs where pigs from many places come in close contact with each other and with people.

Exposure to pigs, especially close contact with pigs, is the main risk factor for infection with variant influenza viruses. While most illness with these viruses has been mild, serious illness, including illness resulting in hospitalization, has happened. To protect those most likely to get infected and develop serious illness, NEDHHS, CDC and 4-H National Headquarters recommend exhibitors (and their friends or family) take the following actions to help prevent the spread of flu between pigs and people. For more education for youth in agriculture please visit: <https://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/yia/index.html>.

Recommendations for Fair Exhibitors with High Risk Factors:

- Anyone at high risk of serious flu complications planning to attend a fair where pigs will be present should avoid pigs and swine barns at the fair.**
- This includes pig exhibitors and family members with high risk factors.
- This may mean that exhibitors with one or more high risk factors do not show their pig(s) this year.

Recommendations for Fair Exhibitors Not at High Risk:

- If you are responsible for the care of pigs, watch them for illness (like loss of appetite, cough or runny nose). Call a veterinarian if you suspect illness.
- Avoid close contact with pigs that look or act ill and notify the fair veterinarian and/or the fair manager that your pig may be ill.
- Take protective measures if you must come in contact with pigs that are known or suspected to be sick. This includes wearing protective clothing, gloves and masks that cover your mouth and nose. (This is called “personal protective equipment” or PPE.)
- To further reduce the risk of infection, minimize contact with pigs in the pig barn and arenas.

As always, take the following preventive actions:

- Don't eat or drink or put anything in your mouth in the pig barn and show arena.
- Don't take toys, pacifiers, cups, bottles, strollers, or similar items into the pig barn and show arenas.
- 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.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home to avoid spreading your illness.

What to do if you get sick:

- Flu symptoms usually include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea
- If you are at high risk and you get flu symptoms, call a health care provider. Tell them about your high risk factor and your symptoms. If you have had recent exposure to pigs, tell them about that too.
- If you are not at high risk and you get flu symptoms after exposure to pigs, seek medical care as you normally would.
- A health care provider can decide whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.
- Influenza antiviral drugs can treat variant virus infections as well as seasonal flu illness in people.
- These drugs work better the sooner you start them, so seek medical treatment promptly if you get symptoms and are at high risk.



For more information:

Telephone: 402-471-2937, NDHHS Office of Epidemiology:
<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Flu.aspx>

Contact your local public health department: www.dhhs.ne.gov/lhd

Information on Influenza A (H3N2) Variant Viruses (“H3N2v”):
<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/variant/h3n2v-basics.htm>

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