



## Swine Influenza

Pigs can become infected with swine flu viruses; this is not an uncommon occurrence in many states with larger swine populations. Influenza viruses can infect many different types of animals: dogs, cats, horses, pigs, birds, marine mammals, as well as others. The influenza viruses generally only spreads among one animal species, so flu viruses that infect animals are usually different from human flu viruses. Occasionally flu can spread from one species to another so a swine influenza virus can spread to people and from people to pigs. This is what has occurred in a few states and made the national news with a new variant of H3N2 flu called "H3N2v".

In 2012, H3N2v flu has been identified in pigs from Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Hawaii; it has been found to cause a mild case of flu in some people who have had direct contact with pigs at agricultural fairs. Most of the people affected have been younger children showing pigs at the fair. **So far there have been no animals or people in Alaska that have gotten sick with this H3N2 virus.** *The flu virus is spread from pigs to people by touching pigs or their environments and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. You cannot get the flu from eating pork.* The animal health and public health officials across the U.S. are working together on this issue to inform the public and be prepared in the case that the virus may start to spread among the human population.

The Alaska fair organizers and 4-H leaders have done a number of things to ensure that the animals and the people at the fair are healthy. They work with local veterinarians and our office to establish health requirements for animals entering the fair. All animals are checked by veterinarians prior to entering the fairs. In addition, the Fair Staff have hand wash stations available as well as procedures set up in case any animal shows signs of illness while at the fair. If any animal shows signs of illness or is not acting right, it is checked by staff and a veterinarian is contacted if needed, the animal may be isolated from other animals or it may be sent home.

There are some things that you can do to help. It is important to monitor your pigs' health while you are showing them at the fair. If you notice any signs of illness in your pigs like coughing, sneezing, runny nose, or going off feed, please contact the fair staff right away.

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and running water before and after working with the animals.
- Keep food and drinks out of the animal areas.
- Avoid close contact with animals that look or act ill.

**Overall the risk for swine flu or other diseases to occur at the fair is low. We encourage everyone to remember to follow good sanitation procedures (hand washing, keep food and toys out of the animal exhibition area) and enjoy the animals at the fair.**

**Additional information can be found at:**

<http://www.epi.alaska.gov/id/influenza/fluinfo.htm>