



*May 2, 2009*

## **Potential presence of 2009 Influenza A H1N1 virus found in pig herd**

### ***Provincial and federal agencies working together to minimize risk***

*Edmonton* ... Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) is working closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), which has confirmed the potential presence of 2009 Influenza A H1N1 virus in a pig herd in central Alberta.

The CFIA is leading the investigation, with assistance from ARD. Preliminary findings indicate the flu has infected some animals among the 2,200 herd. The quarantined herd is being monitored, under the direction of Canada's Chief Veterinary Officer Dr. Brian Evans and by Dr. Gerald Hauer, Alberta's Chief Provincial Veterinarian.

"The Alberta pork industry has very progressive biosecurity protocols and measures in place and we are urging pork producers to be vigilant and ensure the protocols are strictly followed," says George Groeneveld, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. "Producers are encouraged to restrict people from visiting their barns, especially if they have recently been to areas where people have been affected by this virus."

The pigs were exposed to the virus by a worker who had flu symptoms after returning from Mexico. On April 28, the Office of the Chief Provincial Vet was notified that some of the animals had flu-like symptoms. The barn was immediately quarantined and samples were sent to the National Centre for Foreign Diseases for analysis. There have been no other reports of suspected cases of 2009 Influenza A H1N1 virus in pigs and the disease is confined to this operation.

Under the Animal Health Act, implemented in January 2009, flu in pigs is a notifiable disease. The Chief Provincial Veterinarian must be notified of any suspected cases within 24 hours. Precautionary measures are being taken to minimize the risk of spreading the virus to other pigs or people.

Federal and provincial health officials assure the public that properly handled and prepared pork is safe to eat. There is no risk of catching the virus from eating pork or pork products.

**Backgrounder:** Hog industry statistics

**Media inquiries may be directed to:**

Ag Media Line 780-422-1005

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To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

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## Hog and pork industry statistics

- Approximately 400 Alberta agricultural producers derive their primary income from hog production.
- As of January 1, 2009, hog inventories in Alberta were estimated at 1.6 million head, a decrease of about 9 per cent from the previous year.
- Currently, Alberta ranks fourth in hog inventories, behind Quebec (3.9 million head), Ontario (3.1 million head) and Manitoba (2.7 million head). The province also accounts for 13 per cent of the national total of 12.4 million head.
- The total number of hogs slaughtered in federally-and-provincially-inspected plants in Alberta in 2008 was about 2.7 million head, down approximately 8 per cent from a year ago. The Alberta slaughter accounted for about 13 per cent of the national total (21 million head).
- In 2008, Alberta farm cash receipts (FCR) from hog sales totaled approximately \$400 million, down nearly 8 per cent from the previous year.
- International exports of live hogs from Alberta in 2008 totaled approximately 600,000 head, an increase of 1.4 per cent compared to 2007. However, the value of these exports fell 7 per cent to \$50 million, from \$53.8 million a year earlier.
- Pork is safe to eat. The World Health Organization (WHO) has stated there is no evidence that 2009 H1N1 influenza virus can be spread to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork or pork products.

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