

2013 Healthy Fairs

There has been a great deal of press lately about the spread of an influenza virus, called H3N2v, from pigs to people that attended agricultural fairs. In 2013 there have been four human cases associated with a fair in Indiana. Thirteen pigs at the fair also tested positive for H3N2v. In 2012, there were cases associated with fairs in Ohio, Indiana, and Hawaii. This also happened in 2011, including at a fair in Maine.

Influenza (flu) viruses occur in many animal species as well as in people. Generally, human flu viruses infect humans and swine flu viruses infect pigs. However, it is sometimes possible for pigs to spread swine flu to people and people to transmit human flu to pigs. Transmission occurs primarily through aerosols and direct contact.

Fortunately, standard biosecurity practices will reduce the chance of spreading many diseases, including influenza. In order to ensure a safe and productive fair season, common sense guidelines should be used to protect our animals and the people who visit them. This is an opportunity to educate by promoting awareness and good animal health and public health practices.

Common Sense Guidelines

- Exhibitors should examine their animals carefully prior to moving to a fair or show. Animals that are obviously sick or even those that do not look quite right should stay at home.
- People who are sick should not attend the fair and should not be taking care of the animals.
- Livestock superintendants should inspect the animals prior to entry. Do not let sick animals onto the fairgrounds.
- Livestock superintendants and exhibitors should work together to ensure that any animals that become ill during their stay at the fair are promptly removed from public display and sent home.
- Fairs and exhibitors should have a relationship with a veterinarian so that sick animals can be identified, isolated and treated promptly.
- Minimize events and activities that bring the general public into direct contact with show animals.
- At petting zoos and other activities where public contact is allowed, pay particular attention to the health of the animals
- Provide hand washing stations and encourage their use both before and after animal contact. Lead by example.
- Have knowledgeable people available to answer questions from the public and pay attention to public concerns about particular animals that appear to be acting differently.
- All animals returning home from the fair should be kept separate for two weeks from on-farm animals to prevent spread of any illness they might have picked up.

Let's use this attention to educate and promote healthy ways in which to enjoy animals and agriculture this season.