

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

August 15, 2017

For More Information, Contact:

Jill K Baber, MPH

Division of Disease Control

Phone: 701.328.2378

E-mail: jbaber@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Reports First Variant Influenza Case

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reports a confirmed case of variant influenza A H3N2v in a child with exposure to pigs. Influenza viruses that normally circulate in pigs are called variant influenza when the virus is found in people.

Variant influenza viruses are different from typical circulating human influenza A viruses. Most cases of variant influenza occur during summer months in people who raise pigs, or who had contact with pigs at agricultural events like fairs. Influenza viruses do not typically move readily between people and pigs, so variant influenza cases are rare.

Symptoms of variant influenza are similar to those of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches and lack of appetite. People seeing a health care provider for a respiratory illness should let their provider know if they have had recent exposure to pigs. Providers should alert the NDDoH if they suspect variant influenza.

“This is the first time a North Dakota resident has tested positive for variant influenza,” said Jill Baber, an epidemiologist with the NDDoH. “The child visited the North Dakota State Fair in Minot and had direct contact with pigs. The child was hospitalized, but has since been released and is recovering.” A second case associated with the State Fair, in a non-North Dakota resident, has also been identified.

-continued-

The NDDoH recommends taking a few simple precautions when viewing pigs and other animals at agricultural events:

- Wash your hands before and after viewing animals. Soap and water are best, but use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Don't eat or drink while in animal viewing areas.
- Don't bring strollers, or let children bring pacifiers or toys into animal viewing areas. These items can become contaminated.
- Don't touch animals unless invited to do so by the animal's owner.
- Avoid animals that appear ill.
- To further reduce the risk of infection, minimize direct contact with animals and their surroundings in barns and viewing areas.

“Just as humans can become infected with pig flu viruses, pigs can become infected with human influenza viruses. These recommendations help protect both people and pigs from the flu,” said Baber. The CDC recommends people at high risk for complications from influenza, such as the elderly, small children, pregnant women, and people with immune conditions avoid pigs and swine viewing areas, especially if they are enclosed.

Nationwide, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports a total of 418 cases of variant influenza since 2005. So far this year, 14 cases of H3N2v and one instance of H1N2v have been identified in Ohio, also associated with fair exposures.

For more information, contact Jill Baber, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378.

– end –

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.health.nd.gov/news-media/news-releases.

Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ndhealth or Twitter at twitter.com/nddoh.