



Public Health Division
4th Floor-300 Carlton Street
Winnipeg MB, Canada R3B 3M9
T 204-788-6666 F 204-948-2204

Workplace Safety and Health
200-401 York Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P8
T 204-945-3608 F 204-945-4556

Agri-Industry Development Division
CVO/Food Safety Knowledge Centre
545 University Crescent
Winnipeg, MB R3T 5S6
T 204-945-7663 F 204-945-4327

October 27, 2009

Dear Manitoba Turkey Producers, Manitoba Chicken Producers and Manitoba Egg Producers;

Re: Pandemic H1N1 Influenza vaccination

Manitoba Health and Healthy Living (MHHL) recently released the list of Manitobans who would benefit the most from getting the H1N1 flu shot. The vaccine will arrive in stages and the early clinics will be for Manitobans who should get the vaccine first. Once additional batches of vaccine arrive, individuals who work directly with poultry are encouraged to receive the vaccine. We would like your assistance in communicating this information to Manitoba's poultry industry.

Vaccination will help to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus in the community and protect individuals from severe complications of influenza. All Manitobans are eligible to get the H1N1 flu vaccine.

People are most likely to get H1N1 flu from coming into contact with infected people in the community. However, infections have also occurred in turkeys in Ontario and Chile. No outbreaks of H1N1 flu in poultry have been identified so far in Manitoba. Vaccination of poultry workers may reduce the likelihood that H1N1 flu will be introduced into poultry farms. Biosecurity measures will remain important as vaccination may not always prevent infection with the virus.

Vaccination of individuals working directly with poultry may help prevent the mixing of animal and human influenza viruses that may result in changes in the circulating viruses.

Finally, although it is unusual for individuals to get influenza infections directly from poultry, N-95 respirators, eye protection and gloves – should be worn when working with sick poultry to prevent infection. Vaccination will provide additional protection should the H1N1 flu virus be introduced onto the poultry farm.

Poultry workers who develop influenza-like illness:

It is recommended that individuals with influenza-like symptoms (see the attached Self Care for Influenza fact sheet, http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/flu/self_care.pdf) be kept off of farms and away from poultry for seven days.

Public Health and Workplace Safety and Health will work with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives to support farms that may experience a pH1N1 influenza outbreak. Outbreaks of influenza in poultry are reportable to the Chief Veterinary Officer.



Practice Good Personal Hygiene:

To protect against the seasonal flu and H1N1 flu, MHHL and Workplace Safety and Health, Manitoba Labour and Immigration recommend that everyone incorporate these simple steps into daily routines:

- washing hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm running water after handling animals and before eating or drinking;
- using hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available;
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you sneeze, disposing of the tissue immediately, and then washing your hands;
- coughing or sneezing into your upper sleeve – not into your hands, if you don't have a tissue; and
- avoiding sharing food, eating utensils, towels or handkerchiefs.

MHHL and Workplace Safety and Health are working closely with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) to reduce the risk of influenza transmission between humans and livestock.

For information on where to receive the vaccine or if you have any other human health questions, please contact your health care provider, your local public health unit or Health Links-Info Santé at 788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free). If you have concerns about your livestock, please contact your veterinarian or MAFRI.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by Dr. Susan Roberecki

Susan Roberecki, MD, FRCPC, MSc.
Medical Lead – Manitoba Zoonotic and Environmental Health Pandemic Influenza
Planning Table
Public Health Division, MHHL

Original Signed by Dr. Ted Redekop

Ted Redekop, MD, FRCPC
Chief Occupational Medical Officer
Workplace Safety and Health

Original Signed by Dr. Wayne Lees

Wayne Lees, DVM, MSc.
Chief Veterinary Officer, MAFRI

Cc: Dr. Joel Kettner, Chief Provincial Public Health Officer
Dr. Elise Weiss, Planning Chief, Manitoba Pandemic Influenza Response

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