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October 27, 2009

Dear Manitoba Pork Council:

Re: 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 swine are encouraged to receive the vaccine. We would like your assistance in communicating this information to Manitoba's swine 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 swine in Manitoba and elsewhere. Vaccination of swine workers may reduce the likelihood that H1N1 flu will be introduced into barns. Most swine operations have measures in place that already limit swine exposure to human viruses. Biosecurity measures will remain important as vaccination may not always prevent infection with the virus.

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

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

Swine 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 out of barns and away from swine herds for seven days.

Public Health and Workplace Safety and Health are working with Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives to support farms that may be experiencing a H1N1 flu outbreak. Outbreaks of influenza in swine are reportable to the Chief Veterinary Officer.

Practice Good Personal Hygiene:

To protect against the seasonal flu and H1N1flu, MHHL and Workplace Safety and Health, Manitoba Labour and Immigration recommend that everyone incorporate simple steps into daily routines, such as:

- 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

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Planning Table
Public Health Division, MHHL

Original Signed by Dr. Ted Redekop

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Original Signed by Dr. Wayne Lees

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