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H1N1 flu virus confirmed in pig sample – but all pork safe to eat

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Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Monday that USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) has confirmed the presence of 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza virus in a pig sample collected at the Minnesota State Fair submitted by the University of Minnesota. Additional samples are being tested.

"We have fully engaged our trading partners to remind them that several international organizations, including the World Organization for Animal Health, have advised that there is no scientific basis to restrict trade in pork and pork products," said Vilsack. "People cannot get this flu from eating pork or pork products. Pork is safe to eat."

American Meat Institute President and CEO J. Patrick Boyle commented on the H1N1 confirmation by saying that "This event is not unexpected given that much like humans, hogs can contract influenza viruses." He pointed out as well that "Experts have said unequivocally that U.S. pork is safe to eat and that people can not contract the flu from eating pork or pork products. USDA scientists have underscored that novel H1N1 flu is not a foodborne disease. It is a respiratory infection that does not impact pork safety."

USDA reports that sequence results on the hemagglutinin, neuraminidase and matrix genes from the virus isolate are compatible with reported 2009 pandemic H1N1 sequences. The samples collected at the 2009 Minnesota State Fair were part of a University of Iowa and University of Minnesota cooperative agreement research project funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which documents influenza viruses where humans and pigs interact at such as fairs.

The infection of the fair pig does not suggest infection of commercial herds because show pigs and commercially raised pigs are in separate segments of the swine industry that do not typically interchange personnel or animal stock. USDA continues to remind U.S. swine producers about the need for good hygiene, biosecurity and other practices that will prevent the introduction and spread of influenza viruses in their herd and encourage them to participate in USDA's swine influenza virus surveillance program.

More information about USDA's 2009 pandemic H1N1 efforts is available at www.usda.gov/H1N1flu