

*Reassuring public trust and confidence in pork safety***National Pork Board Reiterates Key Messages after Confirmation of 2009 Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Virus in U.S. Herd**

As was the case prior to the USDA confirmation of novel 2009 H1N1 in the United States, the National Pork Board continues to stress three main messages to all audiences:

- Regardless of the outcome of the tests, you cannot get the H1N1 flu from eating pork. Pork and pork products remain safe to eat and handle.
- Scientific studies conducted by the USDA have proven that the H1N1 flu is a respiratory virus, not a food-borne illness, and is not found in the blood or meat of pigs exposed to the virus.
- The two most important steps you can take to protect you and your family from the H1N1 flu are to wash your hands often with soap and water or hand sanitizer and avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Chris Novak, CEO of the National Pork Board, said, “I would like to echo the comments of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack—people cannot get this flu from eating or handling pork.”

**New Message Point Aims to Clarify Novel H1N1 Origin**

Although there’s no scientific certainty about the exact origin of novel 2009 H1N1 virus, some in the media still insist on claiming it came from pigs. To offer a factual rebuttal to these assertions, Dr. Paul Sundberg at the Pork Checkoff created this short answer:

*The most probable biological origin of the novel 2009 H1N1 virus was in people, birds or pigs. New influenza strains can arise through a process called reassortment. This is when different viruses infect at the same time a cell in a person, animal or bird and combine their genetic material. In the case of novel H1N1, scientists are still looking for evidence if this unique reassortment first occurred in people, birds or pigs.*

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*Showing progress in communications efforts***National Newspaper Association Supports Calling Virus H1N1**

U.S. pork producers picked up an important ally recently in their effort to properly name the H1N1 flu virus when the president of the National Newspaper Association urged community newspaper publishers and editors to use precise language in coverage of the flu pandemic.

Cheryl Kaechele, publisher of the Allegan County News in Allegan, Mich., told her members that confusion from newspaper headlines that refer to H1N1 as “swine flu” has “unfairly cast doubt upon the pork industry.” The National Newspaper Association (NNA) is a not-for-profit trade association representing the owners, publishers and editors of America’s 2,400 daily and weekly community newspapers.

Tim Bierman, an Iowa pork producer who is president of the National Pork Board, said he has sent a letter to Kaechele thanking her for her leadership on an issue that is vitally important to the nation’s 70,000 pork producers. “Earlier, I had sent a letter to the top executives of 25 of the country’s leading media asking them to do exactly what Cheryl Kaechele is advocating to her members. I told them that calling the virus anything other than H1N1 contributes to public confusion about the safety of eating pork. It is gratifying to see the leader on the largest association of newspapers supporting pork producers on this important issue.”

Kaechele, in her letter to members, said NNA was asked on behalf of pork producing states to clarify for readers that exposure to hogs, pork products or other swine is not the precipitator of the virus. As newspapers that often cover farming communities, she said, NNA member publications should be aware of the nature of this confusion and accurately label stories about the virus.

Kaechele called members’ attention to this statement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: “This virus was originally referred to as ‘swine flu’ because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a ‘quadruple reassortant’ virus.”

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*Educating to grow trust and confidence in pork production*

## County Commissioners Get Blitzed by Nebraska Operation Main Street Speakers

Talk about covering your bases. In less than two weeks during the end of September, five Nebraska Operation Main Street (OMS) speakers were able to present to every county commissioner in the state. The speakers traveled almost 1,500 miles to complete their mission to speak out for the pork industry during district meetings of the Nebraska Association of County Officials.

During almost every presentation, commissioners wanted to know about the economic impact of the pork industry and how producers were holding up in the current economic climate. They were also interested in odor control and the use of manure as a soil nutrient.

All of the OMS speakers said getting in front of the commissioners had a positive impact and rated their speech as effective in changing perceptions about the pork industry.

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## PORK CHECKOFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### Plunge into Pit Makes Iowa Producer Rethink Safety

It was a typical Monday morning on Aug. 24 when Amanda Vittetoe arrived at one of her family's contract grower's sites to help unload feeder pigs, but everything changed at 8:05 a.m.

"It all happened so fast," says Vittetoe, 23, who lives near the farm where she grew up in Washington County, Iowa. "Once the trailer and chute were in place to unload the pigs, I noticed a gap and went to find a mat to bridge it so we could move the pigs safely. That's when things went black."

Without warning, Vittetoe plunged into the barn's nearly-full manure basin. A lid in the loading room that typically covers the 8.5-foot-deep pit had been removed.

"While it was pitch black in there, I knew exactly what had happened," says Vittetoe, who works with her parents, Jerome and Heidi, as a field supervisor for the family's hog business. "I had no idea if anyone even knew I was there or if anyone would come to help."

Since there was no ladder, Vittetoe attempted to free herself from the manure, which was more than 8 feet deep, by jumping and trying to grab the edge of the pit with her fingertips. She was unsuccessful and, in the process, used up precious oxygen.

"There was no way I could get my head above the surface or scream," says Vittetoe, who swallowed manure and estimated that she was under the manure for 30 to 45 seconds. "Manure in a pit has a completely different consistency than water, and there was no coming up for a breath."

The driver of the livestock trailer, Randy Stalder, didn't see the accident but approached the area after hearing strange gurgle coming from the pit. He came towards the open pit just in time to see Vittetoe's fingertips clawing through the surface of the manure. Within seconds, Vittetoe felt someone reaching for her hands.

She slipped from Stalder's grip as he struggled to get hold of her. Then Vittetoe felt her shirt choking her as she was pulled from the manure. She was immediately taken to Washington County Hospital, where she was examined and discharged. Vittetoe, a runner, has closely monitored her health during the aftermath. While it took a week for her strength to return, she's still haunted by the feeling of helplessness that enveloped her while she was submerged in the pit.

Vittetoe, who noted that the accident occurred on a farm that she had visited only one other time, urges all pork producers to re-evaluate their operation's safety guidelines and become more aware of the dangers that can exist on the farm.

To help you get started, the Pork Checkoff's worker safety page at <http://www.pork.org/WorkerSafety/Default/pork-production-safety-system.aspx> offers links to the Pork Production Safety System. This detailed resource contains tips on developing an emergency action plan and creating an environment that helps minimize accidents by taking a proactive approach to safety.

For more information, contact Liz Wagstrom, [LWagstrom@pork.org](mailto:LWagstrom@pork.org), 515-223-2633.

A new manure-safety factsheet will be available soon from the Pork Checkoff.

For more information, contact Allan Stokes, [ASTokes@pork.org](mailto:ASTokes@pork.org), 515-223-3447.