



Partnering for Influenza Virus **SURVEILLANCE**

The Pork Checkoff, in cooperation with the National Pork Producers Council, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the American Association of Swine Veterinarians and participating diagnostic laboratories, have begun a new initiative to encourage pork producers to participate in influenza virus surveillance in their pigs. The goals?

- Gather more information to help develop effective vaccines for swine influenza virus (SIV) in the future,
- Improve the reliability of diagnostic testing and
- Help improve overall herd health for all producers.

The plan, outlined in the accompanying brochure, was developed over the last few months with input from the groups mentioned above, as well as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In part, the collaboration was enhanced by the circulation of H1N1 in 2009 in both pigs and people. The intended outcome is to offer producers a way to participate in a surveillance program that provides a new mechanism for government support of surveillance priorities as set by producers.

“This surveillance system for influenza reflects producers’ interests while laying the groundwork for consolidating individual disease surveillance systems in an efficient and beneficial way,” said Dr. Paul Sundberg, vice president of science and technology at the Pork Checkoff. “It also demonstrates the good communication and cooperation that exists among government agencies and the pork industry to move this type of initiative forward.”

Efficiencies Gained; Anonymous by Default

“It became clear that a surveillance plan for SIV could be a first step toward a bigger goal of combining current disease surveillance (Pseudorabies, Classical Swine Fever, Brucellosis) with surveillance for other diseases of interest to U.S. pork producers,” Sundberg said. “The goal is to fold animal health priorities for the U.S. pork industry into a comprehensive and integrated swine health surveillance system.”

With surveillance testing results stripped of any producer or veterinarian identification, diagnostic results of the new influenza surveillance will only be known by state of origin unless a producer asks in writing for farm and owner identification to be included in the results. Doing so would serve as a way to increase the ability to track and understand influenza virus movement. All costs for the surveillance program and associated testing will be covered by USDA.

Comprehensive surveillance that includes government and industry surveillance priorities also calls for using one sample for multiple surveillance program tests, saving enough money to fund the additional testing. Samples can come from multiple gathering methods, including diagnostic lab submissions and samples collected from animals clinically ill at points of concentration, such as fairs and exhibitions.

Influenza samples can be included in the surveillance plan if they meet one of two criteria:

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Pork producers should observe animals daily for signs of influenza to help protect herd health.

Good Practices Can Help Deter Influenza

The old adage of “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” applies to swine farms when it comes to any disease – and influenza is no different. That said, here are a few reminders of key precautions to consider when trying to keep flu from making it onto the farm.

- Follow industry-accepted biosecurity practices, including limiting the number of people you allow onto your farm.
- Perform daily observations of all of the animals in your care to assess the health of the animals on the farm and all of the animals transported to other sites or to market
- Carefully monitor your pigs for signs of influenza – coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge and labored breathing.
- If you suspect influenza in pigs, contact a swine veterinarian immediately for proper diagnosis and treatment options.

- Work with your veterinarian to establish a comprehensive herd health plan that considers the use of vaccines and other biosecurity measures.
- Establish, implement and enforce strict sick-leave policies for workers who have developed influenza-like symptoms, such as a fever, cough, body aches and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Encourage people working with the pigs to get the seasonal human influenza vaccine and the use of personal protective equipment.
- Always make sure facilities have good air quality and pigs are free from drafts. ✂



For more specifics on influenza surveillance, go to www.aphis.usda.gov and use keywords SIV 2010. For more details on these and related tips, visit pork.org and use keywords biosecurity and SIV.



Photo: Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Diagnostic Techniques Evolve

Checkoff-funded research has studied and verified using saliva samples to test for viruses and antibodies for different diseases. This is much different from what the industry had to use in the days of pseudorabies eradication when individual pig testing was necessary to determine the status of the herd and catching pigs and taking blood samples was the norm.

Using ropes to test saliva, populations of pigs can be tested for different diseases which will be a much easier way to get a more comprehensive look at the herd's health status. With oral fluids sampling, cotton ropes take advantage of pigs' natural curiosity when they chew on ropes that collect their saliva. This low-cost and low-labor collection method requires less sampling while providing a broad picture of herd health.