

PANDEMIC FLU – Type A H1N1 (NOVEL) STRAIN/'SWINE FLU' BUSINESS INFORMATION SUMMARY



5th May 2009

NSF-CMI have been closely following developments with regard to the potential H1N1 flu pandemic. With a strong background in food safety, health and safety and risk management from 'field to fork', including a team of experienced environmental health professionals, we are able to advise and support our business clients seeking to ensure a suitable level of preparedness and business continuity.

UK Government has done much in recent years to ensure that the country is prepared for any pandemic that may hit....for general information and Q's & A's about the current situation please refer to:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_177831

Please find below a summary of current information (and links to further documents) with regard to:

- Public Health & Business Continuity
- Pigs & Pork Production
- Food Safety implications

Should you have any information and or support needs that are not met by the following, please contact your established NSF-CMI account manager who will do all they can to help.

1. Public Health & Business Continuity:

The UK Health Protection Agency (HPA) and the Department of Health (DoH) have developed simple and generic guidance for the management of this risk in an employment setting which:

- allow businesses to evaluate potential situations where there may be possible exposure to the flu virus
- describe the steps that can be taken to moderate any potential exposure to the flu virus in the workplace
- set out the measures that might be used to reduce the spread of the flu virus in the workplace
- provide a matrix that can be used to consider the best ways of reducing the spread of flu in a work environment
- put into context the relative value of personal protective equipment, including the wearing of face masks, when compared with other environmental and organisational approaches.

This document, which will help businesses with their business continuity plan development can be downloaded from:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/187638/flu_businesses_risk_guidance.pdf

Pandemic influenza checklist for businesses:

The Government recommends that all organisations adopt robust and flexible generic business continuity management arrangements which will help ensure that the impact of any disruptions will be minimised.

Current advice from the World Health Organisation (WHO) is that countries should be planning for a possible influenza pandemic, although timing of onset is highly unpredictable. In the event of an influenza pandemic, businesses will have a key role to play in reducing the risk to employee's health and safety as far as possible, as well as maintaining essential operations.

To assist businesses in developing and reviewing plans, the Government has developed a checklist specifically regarding pandemic influenza. It identifies important and specific activities which organizations can do to prepare for a pandemic as well as where more general guidance will be provided by the Government. Directed mainly at medium and large businesses, some elements will be of use to smaller businesses.

This checklist can be downloaded at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/132464/060516flubcpchecklist.pdf>

Following the WHO's level 5 pandemic alert, the government is sending a leaflet to every household in the country about swine flu. It explains how to prevent transmission of the disease and access vital services if a pandemic does occur. The leaflet can be accessed from: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_177831?IdcService=GET_FILE&dID=194088&Rendition=Web

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is currently advising against all but essential travel to Mexico. If you'd like more travel advice for specific countries, follow the link below to the FCO website.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/>

2. Pigs & Pork Production:

Swine flu (swine influenza) is a disease of pigs caused by a virus (influenza virus). Influenza viruses exist as various types and the most common type found in pigs is Type A. The virus is present in all pig producing countries, including the UK. Type A strains can also infect other species, including people, although the strains of virus involved are usually different. Defra have advised that, whilst they are maintaining surveillance, they have not, to date, found the novel strain in pigs in the UK. Transmission to pigs of the novel strain (as recently reported in Canada) is not unexpected and Defra advice to pig keepers is that they should stay out of contact with pigs if they have influenza signs. This is consistent with the HPA advice to returning travelers which asks people to stay out of contact with other people if they have influenza signs.

EU rules do not permit the importation of live pigs from either the US or Mexico although they do permit the import of live pigs from Canada; these imports are very limited and currently under review at EU level.

More details and regular updates ref. swine flu & UK pig production can be found on the Defra web-site at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/swine-flu/index.htm>

3. Food Safety implications:

It is important to stress that swine flu viruses are not transmitted by food - the novel influenza A H1N1 does not pose a food safety risk to consumers. There is no risk of catching the illness from eating properly handled and cooked pork or pork products.

The swine flu virus is killed by cooking temperatures of 70°C, corresponding to the general guidance for the preparation of pork and other meat products.

You should ensure that food preparation and hygiene practices are carried out in line with your HACCP plans, this includes hand washing and equipment sanitation as this will reduce the risk of passing on all bacteria and viruses.