



Pandemic H1N1 in Domestic Animals (November 6, 2009)

In the USA, as of this date, natural infection of the H1N1 virus has been confirmed in swine (several animals at a fair in MN and a commercial herd in IN), a single ferret in OR, and a single cat in IA. Internationally a flock of turkeys (Canada) has also been confirmed to have been infected with this H1N1 virus.

State and Federal Animal Health officials continue to monitor this virus. The USDA has posted a website (http://www.usda.gov/documents/FINAL_RESULTS_2009_PANDEMIC_H1N1_INFLUENZA_CHT.pdf) where information on confirmed animal cases of H1N1 infection/isolation can be viewed. At this time it appears that H1N1 infection of domestic animals is a relatively rare occurrence. Pigs are the most frequently infected species. In exposed pigs, infection seems to be relatively mild with high rates of infection but no reported deaths (USA). In species other than swine, infection is even less common. There have been no reported animal deaths due to H1N1 virus in this country. Most animal infections have come after their caretakers have exhibited influenza like illness. Because of this, it is apparent at this time that most animal infections are the result of being exposed to humans that were shedding the virus. **There has been no documented case of a person contracting this virus from an animal at this time.**

We will continue to monitor this situation. At this time pets are not considered a risk for transmission of the virus to people. People are a risk for transmission of the virus to pigs, so therefore people who are ill with influenza like illness should not have any contact with pigs. It appears that other species of animals may become infected with this virus, but that such infections are very rare. The usual precautions of frequent hand washing and coughing into your elbow will minimize risk to pets even further as well as minimize risk to other people. Due to the fact that the virus has only sporadically been isolated from animals other than pigs, I am not recommending pets that exhibit signs of respiratory infection be tested for the virus. Swine, however, will continue to be monitored and tested for the virus per USDA recommendations and criteria for case selection.

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