



FAQs: Reducing Flu Risk at Fairs

In recent years, public events that offer animal interaction (such as county fairs) have come under increased scrutiny by federal, state and local public health agencies because of a growing number of cases of human illness linked to animals on display. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control), state health officials, and organizations such as National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians have issued guidance documents and pursued investigations of diseases that have crossed over from animals to humans.

Local fair boards and event managers can take steps to minimize opportunity for disease to pass between animals on display and the human visitors.

How are influenza A viruses transmitted?

Viruses are transmitted through: Contact with an infected person or pig or contaminated surfaces/objects, or through the air in droplets via coughing or sneezing. Touching/rubbing the eyes, nose, or mouth, or putting contaminated items (food, pacifiers, etc) in the mouth are the common points of entry.

Why should fair organizers be concerned with flu transmission?

- Public health threat cited by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Indiana is a leader in swine exhibitions (More shows and more exhibitors in Hoosier State)
- Public perception of the pork industry and products (Resulting negative image of commercial swine and consuming pork products)

Is 72 hours maximum stay a requirement?

The 72-hour rule is a *recommendation* based on The Ohio State University research that found the cases of influenza A-positive pigs increases substantially after 72 hours from the time the pigs arrive on the premises. A barn that starts with only a case or two of (undetected) flu will snowball and spread throughout the venue in only a couple of days.

What can animal exhibition organizers do to reduce influenza risk at events?

Measures to Minimize Influenza Transmission at Swine Exhibitions, 2018, a guidance document to help event organizers, before, during and after events, offers these basic steps:

1. Reduce the amount of time swine are housed on-site, with a goal of less than 72 hours. If that is not attainable for all hogs, reducing animal numbers (when presence is not necessary) as much as possible is helpful.
2. Encourage people to stay safe and healthy when visiting animal barns:
 - a. Wash hands with soap and water after visiting animals.
 - b. Discourage taking food, drinks, baby bottles, pacifiers, toys, and strollers in animal areas.
 - c. People who are more likely to become ill should avoid animal areas, this includes: babies and children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, older adults, and individuals with weakened immune systems or chronic illness.
3. Provide handwashing stations at or near entrances/exits of animal areas. Handwashing stations need to have running water, soap, and paper towels.
4. Post obvious and attention-getting signage to direct visitors to handwashing stations.

What signage is available for swine exhibitions?

Barn entrance/exit signs, developed by Indiana State Board of Animal Health, Indiana Farm Bureau, and Indiana Pork, are available for purchase. More info and order details are online at: www.in.gov/boah/2863.htm