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### **Pork Checkoff Recommends Producers and Workers Get Vaccinated for Seasonal and Novel 2009 H1N1 Flu**

To achieve the best human and animal health protection possible, the Pork Checkoff is advising producers, farm personnel and others who have contact with pigs to get the regular seasonal flu vaccination as soon as possible. When available, this group also should get the novel H1N1 vaccination as well. Although this year is different with the addition of the novel H1N1 flu strain, the typical flu season starts in October and can last through May.

Dr. Liz Wagstrom, assistant vice president of science and technology for the Pork Checkoff, said, "It's more important than ever for producers and swine farm workers to reduce the risk of getting sick and bringing the flu to the farm or workplace by getting vaccinated.

"The seasonal flu vaccine is available everywhere right now and initial distribution of the novel H1N1 vaccine has begun across the country under the direction of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local authorities."

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the novel H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for novel 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

In addition to getting vaccinated for these flu strains, Wagstrom recommends taking other steps to reduce the spread of infection among workers and of the pigs with human influenza viruses. This includes modifying sick-leave policies to encourage workers to stay away from the farm if they are suffering from acute respiratory infections. "Virus shedding is at its peak when the clinical illness is most severe, but people may remain contagious up to 24 hours after symptoms stop, usually from three to seven days," she said.

Good building ventilation and good hygiene also will help reduce transmission of the flu viruses. "To prevent pigs and humans from other species' influenza viruses, producers also should look at bird-proofing their buildings, protecting feed from birds and enforcing biosecurity practices such as the use of farm-specific clothing and footwear."

"The CDC has great information about everything flu-related, who should get vaccinated, who should not and so on. That's why I recommend everybody visit their Web site for more information," Wagstrom added. The CDC's main Web site is [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). In addition, the agency has added [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) .