

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2009

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VIRGINIA HEALTH OFFICIALS CLOSELY FOLLOWING SWINE FLU CASES

(Richmond, Va.) Following confirmation by U.S. health officials that cases of swine flu have been identified in California, Texas and Mexico, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is asking health care providers across the state to have a high index of suspicion regarding cases of influenza like illness. All of the cases reported in the U.S. have recovered.

Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza in pigs. Due to the ability of the virus to mutate, sporadic human infections can occur. The symptoms of swine flu are similar to seasonal influenza and typically include fever, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and runny nose. Additional symptoms may include diarrhea, vomiting, headache, chills, fatigue, pneumonia and respiratory failure. Persons with swine flu are contagious for up to seven days after the onset of illness and possibly longer if they are still symptomatic.

“There have been no cases of swine flu virus reported in Virginia,” said Virginia State Health Commissioner, Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP. “We are contacting health care providers in the state alerting them of the situation and asking them to test individuals who have flu-like symptoms and have traveled to affected areas up to 7 days before becoming ill.” These areas include: San Diego County and Imperial County, California; Guadalupe County, Texas and Mexico. Internationally, the virus has been confirmed in Mexico.

People planning to travel outside of the U.S. should consult the CDC’s website or contact their toll free hotline at 800-CDC-INFO for the latest travel guidance and outbreak notices.

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, they have not determined how easily the virus spreads between people. As with any infectious disease, CDC is recommending precautionary measures for people residing in the areas where the virus has been identified.

VDH encourages anyone with influenza like illness to follow these standard guidelines:

- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

Four different antiviral drugs are licensed for use in the U.S. for the treatment of influenza. At this time, CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses. More information on treatment recommendations can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm.

“Virginia will continue to closely follow the CDC’s investigation and will continue to communicate with the public and health care providers as more information becomes available,” said Remley. Local health districts across the Commonwealth are also working closely with the medical community to monitor this issue.

For more information on swine flu and the ongoing CDC investigation, visit

<http://cdc.gov/flu/swine/index.htm>

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