



Greene County Public Health
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Press Release

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Greene County Residents Are Reminded To Take Simple Steps To Stay Healthy At The Fair

XENIA, OH -- As millions of Ohioans visit any of Ohio's 94 county and independent fairs, leaders at the Ohio Departments of Agriculture (ODA) and Health (ODH), want to encourage guests to practice good hygiene when visiting livestock exhibits this summer.

Ohio's fairs are wonderful events that promote our state's next generation of leaders and highlight the strength of food and agriculture as Ohio's largest industry. We want to ensure that guests and animals at our fairs stay healthy and it's so important that patrons follow posted signs and make healthy decisions when visiting the fair."

Greene County Public Health officials want to remind families, too, that the Greene County Fair is next week, July 28-August 3 and to be sure to take these steps to stay healthy. Visitors should always wash their hands with soap and water before and after petting or touching any animal. Never eat, drink or put anything in your mouth in animal areas. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to leave strollers outside the animal exhibits and carry small children. Older adults, pregnant women, young children and people with weakened immune systems should consider avoiding animal areas.

"Simply washing your hands can help ensure your visit to a fair is fun and safe," said Health Commissioner Howell. "While not common, some illnesses can be directly transmitted between animals and humans, and fairgoers need to keep that in mind this summer."

ODA works with fair boards to increase access to hand sanitizers and hand-washing stations and provides educational signage for posting at barns. Frequent handwashing can lower the risk of getting sick from influenza, salmonella, e. Coli and other illnesses. Ohio's fair veterinarians are trained to closely monitor fair livestock and poultry for clinical signs of illness.

- For 4-H and FFA youth who have swine on exhibit should limit the time their pigs are on the exhibition grounds to no longer than 72 hours.
- Discourage "holdover pigs" held on exhibition grounds and exhibited at additional shows.
- Discuss the use of swine influenza vaccines with a veterinarian and check the exhibition rules for any requirements.
- Vaccines are available commercially and may be used prior to an exhibition as long as slaughter withdrawal times are observed as appropriate. Swine vaccinated for influenza may be less likely to become ill, and if they become sick, they may be contagious for a shorter time-period.

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- Become familiar with the clinical signs of influenza and other illnesses in pigs (off feed, lethargic, fever, nasal discharge, and cough).
- Seek veterinary assistance if a pig becomes sick.
- Understand the risks to both humans and animals of taking a sick pig to a show. Sick pigs need to stay home so they do not risk infecting other pigs or people.
- Likewise, sick people can be infectious to pigs and other people. People with influenza-like illness should stay away from pigs and other people until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Ask the exhibition organizer about any specific actions that may be required if a pig becomes sick at the show.
- Clean and disinfect all tack, feeders, waterers, and show supplies before bringing them to the fair.
- Allow at least 7 days of “down time” (i.e. on-farm quarantine) after returning from a previous exhibition before showing a pig or pen-mates, to reduce the risk of spreading influenza.
- Exhibitors who believe their animal may be sick should immediately contact their barn manager and fair veterinarian. Fair guests who experience illness should contact a medical professional, and their local health department.

Health Commissioner Melissa Howell supports the agricultural exhibitions as providing “meaningful opportunities for the public to learn about the animal agriculture in Greene County”. More than 150 million people visit agricultural fairs each year in North America. Influenza can spread wherever animals or people congregate, and agricultural fairs are no exception. For the youth exhibiting at the fair this represents many months of work dedicated to the care of their animals. Greene County Public Health Epidemiologist Don Brannen, PhD, reports that “While cases of animal to human flu (also called novel flu) in humans is rare, this type of flu has 4 times the rate of hospitalizations than seasonal flu. There have been 466 human cases of novel flu since 2011. Over 90% of these cases have been associated with exposure to swine at agricultural fairs”.

People at high risk for developing complications from the flu include children younger than 5 years of age, people 65 years of age and older, pregnant women, and people with certain long-term health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, weakened immune systems, and neurological or neurodevelopmental conditions). People in these high-risk groups should be should avoid contact with infected swine. All attendees at the fair should know that measures to keep them safe start well before the animals are exhibited. More information about the safety measures can be found at

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/people-raise-pigs-flu.htm>. For more information about Greene County Public Health, please call 937-374-5600 or visit the website at www.gcph.info.

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