

Statement by Bob Stallman, President, American Farm Bureau Federation, Regarding North American Influenza Concerns

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 28, 2009 — “The American Farm Bureau Federation understands that the public is concerned about news media reports on swine influenza in humans. AFBF wants to assure the public that pork is safe and will continue to be safe to eat. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has made it clear that you can not get swine influenza from eating pork or products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

“The public can be assured that the U.S. hog herd is healthy and that the American pork supply is safe. So far, 40 cases of the hybrid flu strain have been diagnosed in the United States. All U.S. cases were spread by human-to-human contact. Preliminary investigations have determined none of the U.S. citizens infected with the hybrid flu had contact with swine. The U.S. pork industry is making every effort to ensure that the U.S. pork supply is safe, and the industry continues to monitor U.S. swine for disease symptoms. Today, there are no reports of influenza virus circulating in the U.S. swine herd.

“AFBF also hopes that the news media will no longer use the term ‘swine flu.’ The World Organization for Animal Health, which handles veterinary issues around the world, says that the new disease should more appropriately be labeled ‘North American influenza’ in keeping with a long standing medical tradition of naming influenza pandemics for the regions where they were first identified. The term ‘hybrid influenza’ is also more accurate.

“We hope consumers will continue to enjoy pork products to support hog producers who were facing difficult economic conditions even before the influenza outbreak.

“AFBF also wants to make it clear to our overseas trading partners that U.S. pork and pork products are safe. The discovery of this virus in humans should not be used as a reason to restrict imports of commercially produced U.S. pork and pork products.”

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