

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Keep Fair Time – Fun Time!

Coldwater, MI. It's fair time.... Time to get your corn dog.... Time to ride the Ferris wheel..... Time to win your blue ribbon.... Time to get the flu? Children all over Michigan take great care of their animals and look forward to displaying them at the annual county fair. However, some animals like pigs and chickens, geese and other poultries can carry disease which can be transmitted to fairgoers. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind all fair attendees to follow these simple precautions so that *fair* time doesn't become *sick* time:

Eight Tips:

Tip #1: Don't take food or drink into animal barn areas; don't eat, drink or put anything in your mouth in animal barn areas;

Tip #2: Don't take toys, pacifiers, cups, baby bottles, strollers, or similar items into animal barn areas.

Tip #3: Wash your hands often with soap and running water before and after petting or touching barn animals. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Parents should supervise young children when washing their hands.

(Tips #4 to #8 are specific to pigs)

Tip #4: Avoid close contact with pigs that look or act ill.

Tip #5: Take protective measures if you must come in contact with pigs that are known or suspected to be sick. This includes minimizing contact with pigs and wearing personal protective equipment like protective clothing, gloves and masks that cover your mouth and nose when contact is required.

Tip #6: To further reduce the risk of infection, minimize contact with pigs in the pig barn and arenas.

Tip #7: Watch your pig (if you have one) for signs of illness and call a veterinarian if you suspect it might be sick.

Tip #8: Avoid contact with pigs if you have flu-like symptoms. Wait 7 days after your illness started or until you have been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer. If you must have contact with pigs while you are sick, take the protective actions listed above.

Live poultry animals may have *Salmonella* germs in their droppings and on their bodies (feathers, feet, and beaks) even when they appear healthy and clean. The germs can also get on cages, coops, hay, plants, and soil in the area where the birds live and roam. Additionally, the germs can be found on the hands, shoes, and clothing of those who handle the birds or work or play where they live and roam. People infected with *Salmonella* may develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most persons recover without treatment. However, in some persons, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized. The elderly, infants, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

Pigs can carry influenza viruses which can spread from pigs to people and from people to pigs. Influenza viruses spread mainly through infected droplets created when an infected pig coughs or sneezes. If these droplets are inhaled or come in contact with a person, that person can become infected. Last year, a specific swine influenza virus, H3N2v, was identified as the cause of illness in over 300 people. Illness was mainly associated with children who attended agricultural fairs. Symptoms of H3N2v infection are similar to those of seasonal flu viruses and can include fever and respiratory symptoms, such as cough and runny nose, and possibly other symptoms, such as body aches, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Remember: Fair time should be fun time! Make sure your family enjoys the fair by practicing these simple tips. To learn more about *Salmonella* or *H3N2v Influenza Virus*, visit our Frequently Asked Questions section at www.bhsj.org.

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