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How are influenza viruses named?

- Influenza types are identified by two surface glycoproteins: The hemagglutinin (H) and the Neuramidase (N). There are 16 different hemagglutinins and 9 different neuramidases so many combinations of influenza viruses are possible. The new virus was identified as an H1N1 virus.
- Influenza viruses also get a “lay name” that is usually determined by the animal from which they were first isolated. The very first influenza virus to ever be isolated was an H1N1 virus that was isolated from a pig in 1930. After this, H1N1 strains were referred to as “swine influenza”.
- Confusion can arise because Influenza viruses have many origins. Typically they originate from a bird strain, a human strain, or a swine strain. If two different influenza viruses infect the same animal they can trade genes and make a new influenza virus. H1N1 viruses can recombine and contain parts from human, swine, and/or bird influenza virus. Many different subtypes of H1N1 viruses are possible.
 - The H1N1 influenza virus that caused the pandemic of 1918 had avian influenza parts. This was discovered well after the pandemic using modern testing.
 - There are H1N1 influenza viruses in the United States that are endemic (commonly found) in pigs.
 - **However, the 2009 H1N1 North American/ Human Virus is a brand new virus that contains parts from human, swine, and bird influenza viruses.**
 - **This new virus has not been detected in pigs in the United States or anywhere else.** Calling this illness “swine flu” is very misleading. Therefore major government / health organizations have begun referring to it by the geographic area of its origin, hence the name “Influenza A (H1N1) North American/Human Virus.”
- **Key “take-home” message: even though the first situation in which an H1N1 influenza virus was isolated involved a pig in 1930, the new 2009 H1N1 virus has only infected people. The new 2009 H1N1 influenza virus has not been detected in pigs.**

What does this mean for the consumer?

- The new H1N1 influenza virus has not been found in pigs and is not known to exist in pigs.
- Pigs are **not** involved in the transmission of the new virus. People get infected by being in contact with other infected people.
- **Key “take-home” message for consumers: Pork is safe to eat!**

What does this mean for pork producers?

- In general, influenza viruses can spread among people, pigs, and birds.
- Since the 2009 H1N1 strain is a brand new strain, we do not know yet whether it can infect pigs.
- This event is a great reminder to pork producers to step up current biosecurity procedures:
 - Limit human traffic on your farm to healthy farm staff. Do not allow non-essential visitors on your farm.
 - Have a sick leave policy in place so that farm staff who may be ill with influenza do not come to work and contact pigs or healthy employees. Recommend that ill individuals or individuals with ill family members contact their family physician.
- Be alert for signs of flu in your pigs (coughing, runny nose, depression, off-feed, fever). Notify your veterinarian if you suspect influenza on your farm.
- **Key “take-home” message for pork producers: Maintain good biosecurity procedures on your farm.**