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Novel influenza A/H1N1 pandemic: the OIE maintains its recommendations to animal health authorities worldwide

While the WHO has officially declared an influenza global pandemic phase 6, the role of animals has not been demonstrated in the epidemiology or spread of novel A/H1N1

Paris, June 11 2009 – In light of the WHO declaration that the novel influenza A/H1N1 has reached phase 6 of an influenza global pandemic, the OIE maintains its previous recommendations made to animal health authorities worldwide.

"A/H1N1 is indeed a public health issue for all worldwide but so far the role of animals has not been demonstrated in its epidemiology or spread. Thus, recommendations we made since the start of this crisis remain valid," explained OIE Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat.

Public and animal health experts worldwide will continue their joint effort on scientific research aimed at better understanding the virus and providing sound, science-based, recommendations for the prevention and control of the novel A/H1N1.

The OIE recalls below the recommendations made at the beginning of the apparition of the disease in humans:

- national Veterinary Services must effectively monitor animal populations for clinical signs of disease, use appropriate confirmation diagnostic methods and rapidly report occurrences of the disease, if any, in animals to the OIE on the basis of an emerging disease;
- pork and pork products, handled in accordance with good hygienic practices recommended by the WHO, FAO, Codex Alimentarius Commission and the OIE, are not a source of infection;
- the imposition of ban measures related to the import of pigs and pig products from countries with human cases of A/H1N1 are pointless and do not comply with international standards published by the OIE and all other competent standard setting international bodies for animal health and food safety;
- the OIE advises its Members that the culling of pigs will not help to guard against public or animal health risks presented by this novel A/H1N1 influenza virus and that such action is not recommended;
- in the case of countries deciding to cull pigs on the basis of the principle of precaution, culling of animals should always be carried out in accordance with OIE international standards on animal welfare and killing methods for disease control purposes (Volume 1; Section 7; Chapter 7.6 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code; http://www.oie.int/eng/normes/mcode/en_chapitre_1.7.6.htm).

The OIE strongly encourages the effective implementation of international standards by all Member Countries and Territories and offers its assistance to any Member wishing to comply with its standards.