



U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

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USHBC MEMO

To: Blueberry Industry Members
From: Mark Villata
Date: May 1, 2009
Re: **H1N1 Flu Precautions**

The recent news concerning **H1N1** Flu again illustrates the need to continually remind your workers, both in the field and in the plant, of basic sanitation practices. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) the following steps should be followed to protect yourself and others by preventing the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

We encourage you to continue sharing the following information with all your workers, be sure that you have sufficient supplies of tissue and hand cleaners available, and that you encourage anyone showing signs of illness to remain at home:

- **Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.**
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.**
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.**
- **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.**
- **If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.**

It should be noted that the virus responsible for the ongoing outbreak of human cases of Swine Flu in Mexico and the United States is not being transmitted by food according to U.S. government sources. The virus is spread by person-to-person transmission.

For reference, a series of questions and answers from the CDC concerning the Swine Flu follow on the attached page. **Please contact the USHBC office at (916) 983-0111 for assistance with media inquiries regarding this issue.**

Reprinted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “H1N1 Flu Questions and Answers”

Additional details can be found on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu in people?

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

Spread of this swine influenza A (H1N1) virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 flu to others?

People with H1N1 influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where H1N1 influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing*
- Bluish skin color*
- Not drinking enough fluids*
- Not waking up or not interacting*
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held*
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough*
- Fever with a rash*

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath*
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen*
- Sudden dizziness*
- Confusion*
- Severe or persistent vomiting*