



THE ADMINISTRATION OF NORFOLK ISLAND

MEDIA RELEASE

Further action on swine influenza

The Norfolk Island Government has taken further steps this week to protect the Norfolk Island community against the threat from Human Swine Influenza.

Acting on the Government's advice, the Administrator has declared Human Swine Influenza – also known as H1N1 Influenza 09 – to be an infectious disease for the purposes of the *Health Act 1913* (NI) and Australia and New Zealand to be places infected with that disease.

The Administrator also authorised the Minister for Health or Government Medical Officer to take those measures and actions that they have reasonable grounds to believe are necessary and reasonable in the circumstances to prevent the introduction into and spread of Human Swine Influenza in Norfolk Island. These measures could include:

- disease surveillance and reporting systems at Norfolk Island's airport;
- taking appropriate quarantine measures if suspected cases of the disease are identified at the airport; and
- requiring disinfection measures on aircraft and ships.

The Norfolk Island Government took this step to ensure that Norfolk Island health authorities have the powers necessary to act quickly in an emergency to prevent the introduction and spread of Human Swine Influenza in Norfolk Island.

This decision was not taken lightly. Regard was had to the following:

- The notices issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) to Governments since 24 April 2009 about outbreaks of a novel strain of Human Swine Influenza. The WHO has since raised the level of influenza pandemic alert for this disease from Phase 4 to Phase 5. Phase 5 is a human-to-human spread of the virus with community level infection into at least two countries in one WHO region. That decision was taken by the WHO to allow Governments to provide leadership and coordination and consider implementing contingency plans.
- The decision by the Australian Government to declare swine influenza to be a quarantinable disease in humans under the *Quarantine Act 1908* (Cth). The Federal Minister for Health and Ageing has also announced a range of measures to enhance human quarantine surveillance at Australian international airports.
- New Zealand has confirmed cases of Human Swine Influenza and has initiated a range of human quarantine measures.
- While there are no confirmed cases in Australia at present, federal health authorities have reported suspected cases of human swine influenza and the Federal Minister for Health has maintained high alert levels.

It is stressed that this declaration is a precautionary measure only and is in line with the actions being taken by other governments overseas. Further, it is not yet clear that there is a pandemic or that one will emerge. It also appears that the H1N1 Influenza 09 is not as virulent as first expected.

The Administrator's notification takes effect from Friday 8 May, the date of its publication in the *Norfolk Island Government Gazette*.

The Norfolk Island Government is continuing to monitor developments and will review its public health response as required.

Further information on the Human Swine Flu is available on the Australian Government's national influenza hotline on ph 08- 84028833 which Norfolk Island residents can call free of charge and on the health emergency website at www.healthemergency.gov.au.

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