



## Northeast District Department of Health

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Health Department Urges Safety at Local Fairs**

Hand Washing and Proper Food Handling Minimize Illness Outbreaks

BROOKLYN - The Northeast District Department of Health (NDDH) is ready for another busy fair season and offers fairgoers simple advice to enjoy the Brooklyn and Woodstock Fairs in a safe and healthy manner.

Every year, NDDH sanitarians inspect hundreds of food establishments at both fairs. All food vendors are required to obtain an NDDH Fair Permit, which must be displayed in a prominent location in the food booth during the entire fair. In addition, all food vendors must possess a current Certified Food Protection Manager (CFPM) certification or Food Awareness and Safety Training (FAST) certificate.

“NDDH inspects all food vendors at the fairs to assure compliance with the Public Health Code,” said Sue Starkey, NDDH Director of Health. “An event that brings hundreds of thousands of people to an area within a short time frame requires tremendous coordination. We remind fairgoers that they play a role in their health and safety. Fairgoers become food handlers when they purchase a food product. They too, should practice food safety so they reduce their risk of food-borne illness.”

In addition to food safety, NDDH encourages frequent hand washing or the use of hand sanitizers if hand washing facilities are unavailable. NDDH-sponsored signage throughout the fairgrounds promotes healthy fair habits.

“Frequent hand washing and proper food handling are two of the best ways to insure a healthy fair experience,” commented Linda Colangelo, NDDH Education and Communications Coordinator. “The fairs have a long-standing tradition of providing fairgoers with plenty of fun, festivities, agricultural and animal exhibits, and food. NDDH partners with fair management to assure that fairgoers have every chance to avoid illness.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported three human infections with an influenza (flu) virus that usually spreads in pigs. These cases were traced to an agricultural fair in West Virginia. Sporadic infections happen every year often in the agricultural fair settings, where pigs from different places come into close contact with each other and with people. These venues may increase the risk of spread of flu viruses among pigs and between pigs and people due to these interactions.

Recommendations to limit the spread of flu viruses include not eating or drinking while in swine barns and other pig areas, avoiding contact with pigs that appear to be sick, and washing hands often with soap and running water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after contact with pigs.

[People who are at higher risk for developing serious flu complications](#) should avoid pigs and swine barns at fairs or wear a well-fitting mask that covers the nose and mouth to reduce their risk of exposure to flu viruses.

“The combination of thousands of people, food, animals and limited hand-washing facilities at the fairs creates a higher risk for bacterial and viral infection, including novel (new) disease,” said Starkey. “These infections can occur through food-borne illness or by interaction with farm animals. By increasing awareness of proper hand washing techniques and the use of hand-sanitizing stations, we hope to reduce the risk of illness for fairgoers. Fun at the fair starts with these simple health reminders.”

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Sidebar:

Enjoy a healthy fair experience by practicing these tips from NDDH:

- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas.
- Do not share your food or beverages with animals.
- Do not eat or drink raw (unpasteurized) dairy products.
- Consume fair food immediately to reduce risk of illness. If that is not possible, don't let food sit out more than two hours. On a hot day (90°F or higher), reduce this time to one hour.
- Be sure to put perishable items in a cooler or insulated bag.
- Never keep leftovers in a hot car.

For more information on food borne illness and staying healthy at animal exhibits, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/prevention.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/stay-healthy-animal-exhibits.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/exhibit-pigs-at-fairs.htm>