

## Quality Pork Processors Worker Illness Investigation

### CAHFS Event Summary

Updated February 26, 2008

#### 1. The Investigation

- An unusual neurologic disease cluster has been identified among workers at Quality Pork Processors (QPP) in Austin, Minnesota
- Several people have been diagnosed with progressive inflammatory neuropathy (PIN) since December 2006
- All the cases worked at the QPP swine slaughter facility in Austin
- 8 of 13 affected people worked at head processing table

#### 2. The Disease

- PIN is a disorder with symptoms ranging from acute paralysis to a progressive symmetrical weakness over several months
- Patients illness severity ranged from minor weakness and numbness to lower limb paralysis
- Most cases reported working in a swine slaughter facility in an area where swine heads were processed
- Patients were more likely to have removed heads or muscle from the pig head (MMWR 2008;57:122-124)
- Speculated that aerosolized pig nervous tissue may have induced an autoimmune-mediated response

#### 3. Current Activities (as of 02/5/08)

- Officials are collecting additional information from cases as well as unaffected co-workers
- Cases have been reported by the Indiana Department of Health among swine plant workers at a Indiana pig slaughtering plant

#### 4. Work Place Precautions

While a specific cause has not been identified, additional precautionary measures have been implemented by QPP on advice from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) for those handling or processing pigs.

- Discontinue the use of the air compressors to remove brains
- Wear gloves
- Use face shields if splashing can occur
- Practice good hand hygiene

5. The Minnesota Departments of Health and Agriculture indicate that this cluster appears to be an occupational illness and not tied to a food source. **At this time, there is no evidence to suggest that the food supply poses a risk to the public.**

***For additional information see the Minnesota Department at Health's website:***

MDH Update ( 2/7/08): <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/qpp/index.html>

MDH Fact Sheet: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/qpp/qpp.pdf>

CDC MMWR (01/31/08) <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm57e131a1.htm>