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Swine Morsels XVII: Commentary on H1N1 and Other Novel Viruses

by Dr. Monte Fuhrman

I saw a trailer for the new Harry Potter movie. There apparently is an outbreak of "swine flu" at Hogwart (the school for the young apprentice magicians). The people start to look like pigs. In addition, an Argentina swine herd was recently found circulating the H1N1 new variant. Epidemiology has not found how this herd was exposed or if it is just a new infection. I saw a WHO (World Health Organization) memo last week that said they (WHO) is concerned that the new H1N1 may revert to increased virulence and the pandemic score remains at SIX (the highest rating for a pandemic). I read an article last week that stated the people that are alive today and survived the flu of 1918 are immune to this new H1N1 variant. This makes sense, as the age of the current H1N1 patients is similar to the age group of victims of the 1918 strain. None of this bodes well for our export opportunities in the USA. While ex-

ports are only down about 4-5% for the year, they are reportedly down 34% last month. None of these will help our short term attempt to educate the world on the safety of eating wholesome pork with no threat of contracting influenza. None of them will help the market for USA raised pigs.

It reminds me of when parvovirus popped up in puppies in 1977. Previous to that time there was no parvo disease in canines. Then suddenly all around the world puppies began showing symptoms of hemorrhagic diarrhea and myocarditis. The virus just kind of showed up everywhere. Do you remember 1988 and the appearance of "Mystery Swine Disease" (PRRS)? This new disease started causing reproductive and respiratory disease in pigs. It seemed to begin in Europe, but strains of the virus showed up that were entirely different in North America. Hence, epidemiology once

again could not definitely explain a "starting point". Canada has maintained a frozen swine serum band (liquid nitrogen storage) since prior to 1970. Tests were run on serums to see if and when PRRS titers actually began to show up. They found ELISA positive samples all the way back into the late 1970's. Hence, the virus was present and didn't cause clinical disease until the late 1980's. Why did porcine circovirus begin causing disease in Europe in the mid 1990's?

On the bright side, Russia opened up pork imports yesterday from three states in the USA. That is a good thing! Pork is three times as expensive in Russia as in the USA. Russian pork producers are making about \$100 per head according to Jim Long at Genesis which he found while traveling in Russia recently. Pork demand is present in the world. The world is just scared of ours right now.

Obama Administration Seeks to Restrict Antibiotics in Livestock

Jul 15, 2009 -

The Obama administration announced Monday that it would **seek to ban many routine uses of antibiotics in farm animals** in hopes of reducing the spread of dangerous bacteria in humans. In written testimony to the House Rules Com-

mittee, Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, principal deputy commissioner of food and drugs, **said feeding antibiotics to healthy chickens, pigs and cattle -- done to encourage rapid growth -- should cease.** And Dr. Sharfstein said that farmers should no longer be able

to use antibiotics in animals without the supervision of a veterinarian. Both practices lead to the development of bacteria that are immune to many treatments, he said.

Full story online: <http://www.aasv.org/news/story.php?id=3683>

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