

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Brienna Schuette • Marketing and Communications Manager • (651) 288-4452 • brienna.schuette@mnstatefair.org

State Fair Takes Precautionary Measures with 4-H Program

The Minnesota State Fair, in partnership with Minnesota 4-H and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), has canceled the remainder of the 4-H Arts-In and Ambassador programs scheduled for the 2009 State Fair.

From a total of 120, 17 members of these two 4-H groups developed flu-like symptoms and were sent home earlier during the fair; four of the cases have been confirmed as novel H1N1 influenza. The remaining participants in the two 4-H programs were sent home earlier today to limit additional transmission and suppress possible new illness among 4-H members arriving later today. The Minnesota Department of Health recommended this action to help reduce the cycle of infection among the 4-H program participants.

“Our commitment is to keep our 4-H youth safe,” said 4-H State Program Leader Dorothy McCargo Freeman. “Minnesota 4-H is very concerned about the health and well-being of its members. We will continue to monitor our youth very closely and will take appropriate action when necessary. With the exception of some leadership and performing arts programs, all other 4-H activities will continue as originally scheduled.”

“It is important to point out that it is perfectly safe for people to come to the State Fair. We do want to remind people that if you are sick you should stay home. It is also a good idea to wash your hands frequently and cover any coughs or sneezes,” said John Stine, Assistant Commissioner of Health at MDH.

“The 4-Hers are very disappointed with our decision,” said Jerry Hammer, executive vice president of the fair, “but we would rather err on the side of caution than to take a chance with the health and well being of these young men and women.”

Further information on the novel H1N1 virus is available on the Minnesota Department of Health’s website at www.health.mn.state.us. MDH can also be reached at (651) 201-5414.

Media availability today:

Representatives from the Minnesota State Fair, Minnesota 4-H and the Minnesota Department of Health will be available to answer questions of the media at 10:30 a.m. this morning in front of the 4-H Building on Cosgrove Street at the State Fairgrounds.