



Date: July 20, 2022

BCD 2022-12
Replaces BCD 2018-08

To: Wisconsin Clinicians, Infection Preventionists, Tribal Health Centers, and Local Health Departments, HERC Directors, Coroners/Medical Examiners

From: Ryan Westergaard, MD, Ph.D., Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases

Influenza Testing and Variant Influenza A Virus Detection

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Background

The 2022 city and county fair season in the Wisconsin is here. During recent summers, swine exhibitions at agricultural fairs and other direct or indirect exposure to swine have been associated with human infections caused by variant influenza A viruses that include A/H3N2v, A/H1N2v and A/H1N1v.

Therefore, it is important to consider influenza among patients with acute respiratory illnesses (ARI) who report direct exposure to swine (showing swine, raising swine, feeding swine, cleaning swine waste or physically touching swine), indirect exposure to swine (in a building that houses swine or attendance at an event where swine are present), or close contact with an ill person who had recent swine exposure or is known to be infected with a variant virus (approximately 6 feet).

ARI is defined as any two of the following conditions: fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea or nasal congestion. Patients who present with ARI and have known or suspected exposure to swine within one week prior to illness onset can be tested at no charge by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) with the prior approval of the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH). Courier services are available for shipment of specimens to the WSLH at no charge (see below).

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) will not reliably detect variant influenza. Consequently, the use of RIDTs to identify variant influenza A is discouraged. Nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal or nasal swabs should be collected from patients who meet testing criteria, placed into one tube of viral transport media and sent to the WSLH for influenza PCR testing. Specimens submitted for testing must include a completed WSLH lab requisition form. A lab requisition form will be sent to the submitter upon approval of testing by DPH.

To obtain approval for testing or if you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Thomas Haupt, Wisconsin Influenza Surveillance Coordinator, at 608-266-5326, or call the Bureau of Communicable Diseases at 608-267-9003.

Shipment of Surveillance Specimens to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene via Gold Cross Courier

Specimen Packaging (WSLH Kit # 18 or equivalent):

- Triple package as “**Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373**” if classified as **Category B**.
- Securely tape the cap of the specimen container, wrap specimen with absorbent material; place the specimen vial into a biohazard bag; place the completed requisition form into the outer pocket of the bag.
- Place the bagged specimen and form in the styrofoam mailer with a frozen kool-pak and cushioning.
- Replace lid on the styrofoam/cardboard box; close and securely tape the cardboard box shut.
- Attach the WSLH address label to the package:
**Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene
Specimen Receiving, Communicable Disease Division
2601 Agriculture Drive
Madison, WI 53718**
- Attach the “*Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373*” label to the package.
- Attach your *return address* label
- Include the *name and telephone number* of the person who knows the content of the package (requirement) with the return address

Specimen Collection & Shipping Supplies:

- Specimen collection and shipping supplies are available at no cost to surveillance sites. Please contact the WSLH Clinical Orders dept. at **800-862-1088** or email HMspecimenreceivingclinicalordersstaff@slh.wisc.edu to order supplies.

Shipping Arrangements:

- The WSLH has a contract with Gold Cross for shipment of specimens to the WSLH, with charges billed to the WSLH. **You are not required to ship via Gold Cross unless you wish to have the transport charges billed to the WSLH.**
- Specimens will be picked up during regular working hours, but you must confirm the time with the Gold Cross scheduler.
- Specimens will be delivered to the WSLH the following day. **If you must ship on Fridays or on the day before a holiday, please include an extra frozen kool-pak.**
- All package preparation should be completed before the courier arrives.
- Contact Gold Cross directly to arrange for a pick-up:
Call: 800-990-9668
Website: goldcrosscourier.com
Same day delivery may be available for specific high priority specimens. However, **pre-approval from WSLH is necessary.**

NOTE: This account is for surveillance specimens or others requested by WSLH. Funding is NOT available for transport of other samples.