NT well prepared to handle any Swine Flu cases

The Northern Territory is well prepared to detect and treat any suspected cases of the new Swine Influenza A strain that has caused over 80 deaths in Mexico in recent weeks, and a number of cases in the USA and Canada.

Health Minister, Kon Vatskalis, today outlined the NT’s preparedness to detect and treat the disease should it reach our shores.

“To date, there have been no cases of Swine flu identified in Australia or the Northern Territory,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“However, the national system has swung into action promptly and efficiently and the NT Chief Health Officer and the Centre for Disease Control, are working closely with Commonwealth and State agencies to formulate public health advice and responses to this flu.

“Here in the NT, all hospital Emergency Departments have been alerted to notify the Centre for Disease Control of any patients who might show flu-like symptoms and who have travelled recently from the affected countries.”

Clinical advice has also been sent by the Commonwealth Chief Health Officer to Northern Territory GPs.

The NT Centre for Disease Control’s Director, Dr Vicki Krause, who chairs the Communicable Diseases Network Australia, said all systems have kicked into action in response to Swine flu.

“It should be noted that the illness appears to be mild in most cases, and the virus appears to be treatable by available antiviral medications,” she said.

“Further, the Swine Influenza A strain outbreak is not a pandemic. However, the NT recently updated its Pandemic Influenza Plans to align with the National Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza, and as a result is well placed to handle a major outbreak of this kind, should one develop.”

Members of the public who have been in North America in the past 7 days and who have flu like symptoms are encouraged to contact their GP for a check-up and tests. They should ring first to let the practice know they are coming.

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