

US swine flu overtakes Mexico's as number of American cases soars to almost 3,000

The number of confirmed swine flu cases in the US has soared to 2,254, with 104 people in hospital, as the outbreak spreads around the world.

By Philip Sherwell in New York

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The WHO has maintained a global pandemic alert at level 5, one short of the maximum alert level 6 Photo: PA

There are another 700 presumed cases in the US which has overtaken Mexico, the epicentre of the outbreak, for confirmed infections after a "backlog" of laboratory tests was released. More than 4,000 people have been made ill in 29 countries, with at least 51 deaths.

The virus killed a woman in the Canadian province of Alberta, making it the third country to report a death. The unnamed victim, who was in her 30s and died on April 28th, had not travelled to Mexico but had other health problems, doctors said.

Canadian food officials also said that they suspect a herd of pigs in Alberta had been infected by a farm worker who had recently returned from Mexico in what would be the first case of human-to-swine transmission.

The death raised the confirmed global toll to 51 - 48 in Mexico, where three new deaths were reported in Saturday, and two in US border towns in Texas.

"Today there are almost 3,000 probable and confirmed cases here in the United States," the CDC's Dr Anne Schuchat told a news briefing. "The good news is we are not seeing a rise above the epidemic threshold in that system." Cases have been reported in 43 of the 50 states.

The confirmed number of new infections in Mexico, where the new mutant strain was first reported, rose from 1,204 to 1,578 as it sets up own facilities to run tests.

The World Health Organisation maintained a global pandemic alert at level 5, one short of the maximum alert level 6, as Japan, Australia, Brazil and Argentina confirmed their first cases.

The three Japanese cases involved a man in his forties and two teenagers who had spent time in Canada. Australia's first case was a 28-year-old woman who returned on a flight from Los Angeles on Thursday.

Mexican officials said 24 percent of the dead were obese and many of the victims had diabetes and related cardiovascular conditions such as angina and high blood pressure. Diabetes is the nation's leading cause of death.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/swine-flu/5300902/US-swine-flu-overtakes-Mexicos-as-number-of-American-cases-soars-to-almost-3000.html>