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Pork is safe to eat, farmers reiterate

The NSW Farmers' Association is reassuring consumers that pork sold in Australia is not in any way associated with the outbreak of swine influenza, and remains safe to eat.

NSW Farmers' Association Pork Committee Chair Malcolm Gett says reports that pork sales have dropped dramatically overnight indicates that consumers are wrongly associating swine influenza, more commonly known as swine flu, with pork products.

"It is important to emphasise that swine flu is not a food safety issue. Consumers cannot contract swine flu from eating pork products sold in Australia," Mr Gett said.

"While we certainly understand the level of public concern regarding this outbreak, it is essential that all consumers are aware that the virus is a human health issue, not an animal health issue.

"Pork sales have slipped dramatically as a result of the swine flu scare, with one large meat retailer in Sydney reporting sales are down 90 per cent.

"Such reports illustrate the level of public concern, and indeed confusion, regarding this issue," Mr Gett said.

Mr Gett's comments come following reassurances from leading Australian and world authorities, including the Australian Veterinary Association, Australian Pork Limited, World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organisation.

"Australian pork producers are rigorous in guarding the pork industry from diseases such as swine flu, and the World Organisation of Animal Health has said there is no proof that the current virus has even derived from animal origins," Mr Gett said.

"Australia does not import any pigs from overseas, and we have stringent processes and protocols to protect the 'clean and green' Australian pork industry and our consumers.

"As a result, consumers should feel confident in eating Australian pork," Mr Gett concluded.

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