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Consumers happy to keep pork on their fork

Most Australians intend to continue buying and eating pork despite global concerns about the spread of the A/H1N1 variant influenza virus, according to a Quantum survey conducted last weekend.

The national survey of 500 people showed the so-called swine flu would not change consumers' intentions to buy pork in 83 per cent of households, with 3 per cent more likely to buy pork and only 6 per cent much less likely to do so.

Importantly, 86 per cent of respondents disagreed or were neutral to the proposition they might eat less pork because of the flu variant outbreak.

Andrew Spencer, CEO of Australian Pork Ltd, which commissioned the survey, said he was pleased most Australians were taking sensible and informed decisions about eating pork and processed pork products.

He said some retailers reported a slight decline in sales last week, though butchers' sales remained largely unaffected.

"Any dip in demand has likely been driven by the incorrect association between influenza A/H1N1 and consuming pork, despite the fact that there is absolutely no connection," said Mr Spencer.

"Consumers are safe. The scientific evidence is that there is no link between eating pork and contracting the flu, and we are delighted Australians are hearing these reassurances and acting accordingly by continuing to keep pork on the menu."

The NSW Food Authority Chief Scientist, Dr Lisa Szabo, this week said in a media statement: "Swine influenza is not regarded as a food safety issue, so people need not be concerned about eating pork or other pig meat products."

The survey showed that 79 per cent of Australians were confident the flu outbreak will be contained or managed to minimise its impact on Australians.

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Mr Spencer said the survey also revealed Australians wanted more information about the flu and how to prevent it affecting their lives.

The pork industry is an integral part of the Australian economy, with a supply chain worth about \$2.6 billion, providing more than 33,000 jobs.

“It’s vital that Australians continue to support their pork farmers and farming communities. They can be safe in the knowledge they can continue to enjoy one of Australia’s most popular food products without any fear or concerns for their health,” Mr Spencer said.

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ABOUT QUANTUM

Quantum Market Research is a market and social research company based in Melbourne and operating nationally and internationally to provide organisations with timely and insightful research information to assist decision-making.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The research was undertaken from May 1-4 2009 via an online survey with a representative sample of Australians aged 18+ years. A sample of 500 interviews was obtained. A sample of 500 interviews provides a maximum margin of sampling error of 4.4% at the 95% confidence level.

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