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Dear Assembly Members

I write to provide you with the most up-to-date information concerning the outbreak of Swine Influenza in Mexico, and the state of preparedness, should there be any confirmed cases, here in Wales.

The Health Protection Agency has been monitoring the situation and has issued advice to the public and professionals on what "swine influenza" is and advice on managing people who have returned from the affected area who present to the NHS with symptoms. This is available on their website.

We fully expect that there will be cases reported in Wales, and although it is natural for people to feel apprehensive, we can reassure the public that we are working to prepare for the arrival of the virus, and have robust procedures in place. As recently as last week, a successful Wales-wide exercise was held to rehearse for an outbreak of this nature, and we are well placed to deal with its effects. We have stocks of antiviral drugs for 50% of the population and reports on the swine flu viruses involved is that these drugs are effective.

I am involved in the Ministerial COBRA meetings, and am in regular contact with the CMO and other officials in the Assembly Government, who are ensuring that we are prepared - but who are also advising me on the risk of undue public alarm at this stage. I will be offering briefings to opposition party spokespeople here in the Assembly tomorrow morning.

