

1 Substitutions near the hemagglutinin receptor-binding site determine the antigenic evolution of
2 influenza A H3N2 viruses in U.S. swine

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11 Running Head: Evolution of swine influenza A (H3N2) virus

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19 **ABSTRACT**

20 Swine influenza A virus is an endemic and economically important pathogen in pigs with the
21 potential to infect other host species. The hemagglutinin (HA) protein is the primary target of
22 protective immune responses and the major component in swine influenza A vaccines. However, as
23 a result of antigenic drift, vaccine strains must be regularly updated to reflect currently circulating
24 strains. Characterizing the cross-reactivity between strains in pigs and seasonal influenza strains in
25 humans is also important in assessing the relative risk of interspecies transmission of viruses from
26 one host population to the other. Hemagglutination inhibition (HI) assay data for swine and human
27 H3N2 viruses were used with antigenic cartography to quantify the antigenic differences among
28 H3N2 viruses isolated from pigs in the USA from 1998-2013 and the relative cross-reactivity
29 between these viruses and current human seasonal influenza A strains. Two primary antigenic
30 clusters were found circulating in the pig population, but with enough diversity within and between
31 the clusters to suggest updates in vaccine strains are needed. We identified single amino acid
32 substitutions likely responsible for antigenic differences between the two primary antigenic clusters
33 and between each antigenic cluster and outliers. The antigenic distance between current seasonal
34 influenza H3 strains in humans and those endemic in swine suggests that population immunity may
35 not prevent the introduction of human viruses into pigs and possibly vice-versa, reinforcing the
36 need to monitor and prepare for potential incursions.

37 **Importance**

38 Influenza A virus (IAV) is an important pathogen in pigs and humans. The hemagglutinin (HA)
39 protein is the primary target of protective immune responses and the major target of vaccines.
40 However, vaccine strains must be updated to reflect current strains. Characterizing the differences
41 between seasonal IAV in humans and swine IAV is important in assessing the relative risk of
42 interspecies transmission of viruses. We found two primary antigenic clusters of H3N2 in the U.S.
43 pig population with enough diversity to suggest updates in swine vaccine strains. We identified
44 changes in the HA protein that are likely responsible for these differences that may be useful in

45 predicting when vaccines need to be updated. The difference between human H3N2 and those in
46 swine is enough that population immunity is unlikely to prevent new introductions of human IAV
47 into pigs or vice-versa, reinforcing the need to monitor and prepare for potential introductions.

48 **INTRODUCTION**

49 Influenza A viruses (IAV) have negative sense RNA genomes consisting of 8 segments. To
50 date, the influenza A subtype is comprised of combinations of 17 hemagglutinin (HA) and 11
51 neuraminidase (NA) surface glycoproteins (1-7). Waterfowl are the natural reservoir of most IAV
52 subtypes and in these species, infections are generally non-pathogenic. In certain instances, these
53 viruses can cause substantial morbidity and mortality following transmission to other species (e.g.,
54 (8-10)). However, only H1N1, H1N2, and H3N2 subtypes are endemic in swine populations
55 globally (11) and virulence is variable depending on properties of the virus, environment, and
56 particularly the host and population immunity.

57 Swine influenza was first recognized as a respiratory disease that coincided with the human
58 Spanish flu pandemic in 1918. The classical swine A(H1N1) viruses were derived from the 1918
59 human pandemic virus and remained endemic in the swine population with little evidence of
60 antigenic drift for approximately 80 years. In 1998, a novel virus emerged in North American pigs
61 containing what has become known as the triple-reassortant internal gene (TRIG) cassette, with
62 genetic components from classical swine H1N1 (NP, M, NS), human seasonal H3N2 influenza
63 (PB1, HA, NA) and North American avian influenza (PB2, PA) viruses. The HA genes from the
64 triple reassortant H3N2 were the contribution of 3 separate phylogenetically distinct human
65 seasonal virus introductions, termed Clusters I, II, and III (12), with the cluster III H3 evolving into
66 a separate Cluster IV (13). These TRIG-viruses subsequently reassorted with the classical H1N1
67 swine viruses resulting in distinct H1N1 or H1N2 subtype lineages (14-16). The H1N1 and H1N2
68 subtypes then evolved in pigs to form the contemporary α , β and γ clusters (17). Then in 2005,
69 H1N1 and H1N2 influenza viruses with the HA and/or NA derived from seasonal human influenza
70 A viruses circulating in 2002 emerged in pigs and spread across the U.S. in swine herds. Currently,
71 H1N1, H1N2 and H3N2 subtypes of IAV are endemic in pigs in North America (12, 18). The
72 marked genetic heterogeneity of HA's circulating in North American pigs have potential antigenic
73 consequences in terms of diagnostic test efficacy, use of vaccine as a means of control, and

74 assessing the relative risk of further introductions of human seasonal influenza viruses into the pig
75 population.

76 Introduction of endemic swine IAV into humans continues to occur, with the most recently
77 notable pandemic H1N1 virus (H1N1pdm09) that emerged in the human population in North
78 America in 2009 (19). However, in the summers of 2011-2013 there were multiple infections of
79 H3N2v in people attending agricultural fairs in a number of states in the U.S. (20, 21) with nearly
80 350 cases of H3N2v now detected in humans ([http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/variant-cases-](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/variant-cases-us.htm)
81 [us.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swineflu/variant-cases-us.htm)). A factor for the increased frequency of H3N2v detections is the relative lack of human
82 population immunity against variants of IAV that have continued to circulate independently in
83 swine, with the ever-present potential for these variants to evolve antigenically, perhaps away from
84 their respective human seasonal precursor viruses and the strains used in contemporary human
85 seasonal vaccines. A substantial proportion of adolescents and young adults were shown to have
86 cross-reactive antibodies against H3N2v; however, children and older adults lacked such protective
87 antibodies (22, 23). The current human seasonal vaccines containing H3N2 do not appear to
88 protect against H3N2v (22, 24). Since the vast majority of cases of H3N2v have been in children
89 with close contact and long periods of exposure time at agricultural fairs, all of these factors point
90 to a unique set of circumstances that collectively increased the odds for H3N2v in these spillover
91 events (25). The unique circumstances do not diminish the epidemic or pandemic risk of H3N2v to
92 humans if these viruses gained the ability to efficiently transmit from human to human, allowing the
93 virus further opportunity to mutate and adapt to the human host. Thus swine IAV not only cost the
94 swine industry in terms of animal health and production (8), but also pose a potential risk to human
95 health. Insights into patterns of swine IAV genetic and antigenic diversity are critical to identify
96 risks to human and swine populations for interspecies transmission and provide criteria for updating
97 influenza diagnostics and vaccine composition.

98 To accurately assess the risk to pigs from introduction of human seasonal IAV and vice
99 versa requires an understanding of the population dynamics, evolution, and function of circulating

100 swine IAV. Quantitative analyses of key factors that contribute to zoonotic risk, namely the relative
101 antigenic cross-reactivity of currently circulating human and swine IAV strains, will allow for
102 improved methods of control by optimizing vaccination in swine. Here, we quantified the antigenic
103 and genetic evolution of swine H3N2 influenza A viruses circulating in pigs from 1998-2013 across
104 the U.S. with a focus on contemporary strains and we related the cross-reactivity of these viruses to
105 currently circulating human seasonal H3 influenza viruses used as vaccine strains, demonstrating
106 substantial antigenic differences between contemporary swine H3N2 circulating in the U.S. and
107 those included in human vaccines. Integrating the antigenic data with HA1 domain sequences, we
108 examined the genetic basis for antigenic differences among circulating swine H3N2 isolates, and
109 identified amino acid substitutions that may lead to immune escape and vaccine failure in pigs.

110 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

111 *Viruses*

112 Forty-two swine and human influenza A H3N2 viruses were selected as hemagglutinin inhibition
113 (HI) test antigens and/or antigens for swine H3N2-antisera production (Table 1). The swine H3N2
114 viruses (n = 33) represented twelve U.S. states and major swine production regions and included 1
115 cluster I H3 from 1998 and 1 cluster II from 1999 as historical references, and 31 cluster IV isolates
116 from 2006-2013 for our contemporary analysis. Viruses isolated from 1998-2009 (n = 6) from
117 outbreaks of respiratory disease in pigs from diagnostic cases were obtained from the University of
118 Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (UMN-VDL, kindly provided by Dr. Marie Culhane).
119 The remaining 2010-2013 viruses were obtained from the USDA-National Animal Health
120 Laboratory Network (NAHLN) voluntary swine influenza A virus (IAV) surveillance system
121 repository held at the National Veterinary Service Laboratories (kindly provided by Dr. Sabrina
122 Swenson). Viruses were selected based on the H3 gene phylogeny, representing the maximum
123 number of swine-producing states, and representing each of the clusters IV and IVA-F. The cluster
124 designations were based upon phylogenetic support (nodes with supportive bootstrap values >70)
125 that also met genetic distance criteria of >5% from other clusters. Available virus isolates meeting

126 this criteria with acceptable growth properties were then randomly selected for study. Human
127 seasonal H3N2 viruses isolated in 1995-2011 (n = 8) and incorporated into the 1996-2013 human
128 influenza vaccines for the Northern hemisphere were obtained from St. Jude Children's Research
129 Hospital (kindly provided by Dr. Richard Webby). One non-seasonal human virus,
130 A/Indiana/08/2011 was provided from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
131 (kindly provided by the late Dr. Alexander Klimov). This virus was isolated from a human case
132 infected with swine IAV reported in July 2011 and is classified as an H3N2 variant (H3N2v) virus.
133 Viruses were propagated in Madin-Darby canine kidney (MDCK) cells, MDCK-London (MDCK-
134 L, Influenza Reagent Resource, VA, USA) cells or embryonated eggs. Harvested cell culture
135 supernatant or allantoic fluid was clarified by centrifugation and virus was concentrated by
136 ultracentrifugation over a 20% sucrose cushion. Virus pellets were resuspended overnight at 4°C in
137 sterile phosphate buffered saline at pH 7.4 and stored at -80°C.

138 ***Swine antisera production***

139 Three week-old cross-bred pigs free of IAV and antibody, porcine reproductive and respiratory
140 syndrome virus, porcine circovirus 2 and *Mycoplasma hyopneumoniae* were obtained. For each
141 virus, two pigs were immunized with 128-256 hemagglutinin units (HAU) of ultraviolet (UV)
142 inactivated IAV combined with 20% commercial adjuvant (Emulsigen D; MVP Laboratories, NE,
143 USA) by the intramuscular route. Two or three doses of UV inactivated vaccines were given
144 approximately 2–3 weeks apart. Pigs were bled weekly post-vaccination to test for HI titers against
145 homologous virus. When HI titers to homologous virus reached at least 1:160, pigs were humanely
146 euthanized with pentobarbital sodium (Fatal Plus, Vortech Pharmaceuticals, MI, USA) for blood
147 collection. Sera were collected and stored at -20°C.

148 ***Virus antigenic characterization***

149 HI assays using post-vaccination pig antisera were performed to compare the antigenic properties of
150 swine and human IAV viruses. Prior to HI testing, sera were treated with receptor-destroying
151 enzyme (Sigma-Aldrich, MO, USA), heat inactivated at 56°C for 30 min and adsorbed with 50%

152 turkey red blood cells (RBC) to remove nonspecific inhibitors of hemagglutination. HI assays were
153 performed by testing reference antisera raised against 18 swine and 9 human influenza A H3N2
154 viruses with 42 H3N2 viruses according to standard techniques. Serial 2-fold dilutions starting at
155 1:10 were tested for their ability to inhibit the agglutination of 0.5% turkey RBC with 4 HAU of
156 swine and human H3N2 viruses. All HI assays were performed in duplicate. See Table 1 for list of
157 viruses and reference antisera.

158 *Antigenic cartography*

159 The quantitative analyses of the antigenic properties of swine and human influenza A H3N2 viruses
160 were performed using antigenic cartography as previously described for human H3 and swine
161 influenza A H3 and H1 viruses (26-29). Antigenic clusters were defined using a Ward Hierarchical
162 Clustering approach, as K-means clustering was biased by the large number of antigenic outliers in
163 the dataset, using Euclidean distances among strains in the antigenic map implemented in R version
164 3.0.2 (30). To quantify the relative distances from vaccines to currently circulating viruses we
165 measured the antigenic distance from representative Cluster I and Cluster IV swine vaccine strains
166 and the human strain, A/Victoria/361/2011, to all other swine influenza A H3N2 viruses and plotted
167 these against year of isolation using R version 3.0.2 (30).

168 *Model of the structure of swine influenza A hemagglutinin*

169 A model of the structure of the HA of A/Swine/Illinois/A01241469/2012 was built by using Choral
170 (31) and Andante (32) based upon the crystal structure of H3N2 HA of the A/Aichi/1/68 (PDB code
171 2viu) and subsequently visualized with PyMOL (33).

172 *Phylogenetic and sequence analyses*

173 Contemporary H3N2 influenza A hemagglutinin (HA) and neuraminidase (NA) sequences
174 representing clade designations described in (34) were compiled with sequences used in the HI-
175 assay (Table S1). Amino acid alignments of the HA1 domain and NA were generated using default
176 settings in MUSCLE v.3.8.31 (35) with subsequent manual correction in Mesquite (36). For each
177 alignment, we inferred the best-known maximum likelihood tree using RAxML v7.3.4 (37) by

178 initiating 500 independent tree searches from random start trees generated under parsimony
179 methods implemented with the best fit model of evolution determined in ProtTest v.3.2 ((38): data
180 available upon request). Thereafter, we executed 1000 nonparametric bootstraps and the support
181 values obtained were drawn on the best-scoring tree.

182 To estimate the average rate of nucleotide substitution in the HA1 domain, we constructed a
183 second dataset incorporating all U.S. swine IAV H3N2 HA1 sequences from 1997 to present:
184 nucleotide sequences were downloaded from the Influenza Virus Resource (39) on July 2, 2013
185 (Table S2: Figure S1). A maximum likelihood tree was inferred using RAxML (v7.4.2; (37)) on the
186 CIPRES Science Gateway (40) employing a general time-reversible (GTR) model of nucleotide
187 substitution with Γ -distributed rate variation among sites. The starting tree was generated under
188 parsimony methods, with the best-scoring tree and statistical support values obtained with the rapid
189 bootstrap algorithm (1,000 replications). Subsequently, we extracted the patristic distance from
190 A/Wuhan/359/95 in the ML tree to each isolate in Cluster IV H3N2 swine IAV clade using program
191 R v.3.0.2 with the APE (41) and GEIGER (42) packages. Linear models of genetic distance
192 (response vector) and time (linear predictor for response) were fitted using the program R v.3.0.2
193 (30).

194 HA1 domain deduced amino acid sequence alignments were used to calculate the number of
195 amino acid substitutions between pairs of isolates. We made genetic maps using a similar method to
196 that used for antigenic maps except that the target distances were the number of amino acid
197 substitutions between the amino acid sequences for each antigen in the antigenic map (26).

198 *Analyses of antigenic evolution*

199 Not all substitutions will be responsible for antigenic changes in the HA. An amino acid
200 substitution X to Y at location L is considered a “cluster-difference” substitution between clusters A
201 and B if all (or all but one) isolates in cluster A have amino acid X at location L and all (or all but
202 one) isolates in cluster B have amino acid Y at location L (26, 43). We used this classification and
203 the HA1 domain amino acid alignments above, to determine which amino acids likely defined the

204 difference among swine influenza A H3N2 virus antigenic clusters and outlying variants, and
205 compared these results to the antigenic effects of the cluster-difference substitutions observed for
206 H3N2 influenza A viruses in humans (43).

207 **RESULTS**

208 *Swine H3N2 viruses are antigenically diverse*

209 Cross HI titers were tabulated (Table S3) and used for antigenic cartography analyses. One strain,
210 A/swine/Minnesota/01146/2006, showed the broadest cross-reactivity against the swine H3N2
211 antisera tested and may serve as a suitable contemporary reference strain. However, among the
212 swine and human influenza A H3N2 viruses, HI cross-reactivity was highly variable and these
213 antigenic relationships are shown in the 3D antigenic map in Figure 1A, with each antigen colored
214 according to the antigenic cluster to which it belonged. The swine viruses circulating between
215 2006-2013 formed two major antigenic groups, the cyan and the red antigenic clusters. Other more
216 antigenically diverse strains arising between 2010-13 were also observed, classified as outliers in
217 the cluster analyses, and identified with unique color-coding. A/Wuhan/359/1995 and the cluster I
218 prototype swine influenza A H3N2 virus are shown in light blue, and A/Sydney/5/1997,
219 A/Moscow/10/1999 and the cluster II prototype swine influenza A H3N2 viruses are shown in light
220 pink. Light grey spheres are human H3N2 isolates from 2002 -2011 and the large grey sphere is
221 A/Victoria/361/2011.

222 *Genetic evolution of U.S. swine H3 between 1995 and 2013*

223 The ML phylogenetic tree (Figure 2A) shows that the genetic evolution of the swine influenza A
224 (H3N2) viruses consisted of 5 contemporary clades evolved from Cluster IV. In agreement with the
225 criteria previously suggested, a 5-7% average pairwise nucleotide distance threshold (18) continued
226 to define the new putative clusters of contemporary swine H3. Thus, clusters A, B, C, E and F were
227 identified as newly formed genetic clusters, as evidenced by the pairwise criteria as well as onward
228 transmission into 2013 and continued genetic evolution. Figure 2C shows the genetic map made

229 from pairwise differences among strains and again demonstrates the HA clade evolution of
230 currently circulating strains.

231 There was a lack of concordance between the topology of the HA and NA gene phylogenies
232 (Figure 2A and 3). The NA phylogeny reveals that the majority of our contemporary isolates have
233 an N2 gene derived from a 2002 human origin N2 lineage. However, there were no H3 cluster
234 predilections for the possession of the 1998 or 2002 lineage N2 genes with the exception of Cluster
235 IV-F. This is demonstrated by isolates classified with specific Cluster IV lineages using the HA
236 gene, but being scattered incongruously throughout NA gene lineage.

237 To evaluate the amount of variation accrued over time in the swine H3 genes, the distance
238 from A/Wuhan/359/95 to each isolate in Cluster IV was plotted as a function of time (Figure 4).
239 The regression line had a slope of 0.006 (x -intercept = -11.58 ± 0.27 S.E.; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.75$; p -
240 value < 0.0001); the slope gives the rate of evolution of nucleotide substitutions per year. There was
241 an apparent increase in diversity since the emergence and reassortment of the H1N1pdm09 viruses
242 in the U.S. swine population since 2009; however, limited sampling prior to 2009 may have biased
243 our inference. The solid regression line for the three years prior to 2009 had a slope of 0.003 (x -
244 intercept = -7.84 ± 1.31 S.E.; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.30$; p -value < 0.0001) whereas the hatched regression
245 line for 2010-present had a slope of 0.005 (x -intercept = -10.40 ± 0.68 S.E.; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.31$; p -
246 value < 0.0001). Though the regression lines had significantly different intercepts (ANCOVA: p -
247 value < 0.0001), the difference in rates of evolutionary change was suggestive but not statistically
248 significant (ANCOVA: p -value = 0.12). Retrospective sampling of viruses isolated prior to 2009 or
249 alternate phylogenetic techniques are required to tease apart these dynamics.

250 ***Predictability of antigenic cluster by phylogenetic cluster***

251 Since vaccine strain selection or choice of currently available vaccine for swine in the US relies
252 primarily on the genetic similarity at the nucleotide level between vaccine strains and the outbreak
253 strain, we investigated whether the antigenic phenotype could be predicted from the genetic cluster
254 of a particular isolate. When we colored the ML phylogenetic tree (Figure 2B) and genetic map

255 (Figure 2D) according to antigenic cluster to which each strain belonged we found that the
256 antigenic cluster was not predicted from the phylogenetic clade alone, or pairwise comparison of
257 amino acid sequences, particularly for isolates in Clusters IV A, B, D and F. For example, red
258 antigenic cluster isolates were located genetically in the newly formed Clusters IV-A, -B and -D.
259 Cyan-colored antigenic cluster isolates were located genetically in Clade IV and Clade IV-F. The
260 isolate A/swine/Pennsylvania/A01076777/2010 was a genetic outlier not clustered in one of the
261 newly emerged phylogenetic branches, yet mapped antigenically with the red cluster.

262 ***Genetic basis for antigenic differences among currently circulating swine influenza A (H3)***

263 ***viruses***

264 To investigate the molecular basis of the antigenic clusters, we aligned the amino acid sequences
265 used in this study (Figure S2), grouped and color-coded based on the antigenic cluster, and marked
266 with the cluster-defining amino acid substitutions relative to the earliest Cluster I H3 cluster in pigs
267 from a Wuhan 95-like human seasonal influenza A H3 virus introduction. A subsequent seasonal
268 human influenza A H3 introduction into pigs from a Sydney 97-like virus led to the swine Cluster II
269 viruses and differs from the Wuhan-like Cluster I strains at amino acid positions 156 and 158 for all
270 antigens.

271 Focusing on the currently circulating strains in North American pigs, we found 2 main
272 antigenic clusters and 10 different antigenic variants mapping a significant antigenic distance away
273 from the two primary clusters (red cluster in Figure 1B and cyan cluster in 1C). The cyan cluster
274 consisted of strains isolated from 2004-2012, and contains strains from the same genetic cluster as
275 the putative Cluster IV vaccine strain. The red cluster consisted of strains isolated from 2010-2013
276 and included the H3N2v strain A/Indiana/08/2011 representing the human agricultural fair
277 outbreaks of 2011-12. The two spheres colored in gold represent the isolate
278 A/swine/Minnesota/A01125993/2012, which differed from the red cluster at position 145 and 159
279 (2 A/swine/Minnesota/A01125993/2012 isolates with different passage history were analysed here
280 and thus the data were not combined). One or both of these 2 amino acid substitutions (N145K and

281 Y159N) likely results in the 6 antigenic unit distance from the red cluster. The strain colored in light
282 green isolated in 2013 (A/swine/Wyoming/A01444562/2013) differed from the red cluster at only
283 position 145 and was 5.5 antigenic units away from the red cluster. The strain colored in blue
284 A/Swine/Michigan/A01203498/2012 differed from the majority of the red cluster strains at
285 positions 145 and 155 and was positioned ~5 antigenic units away. A/swine/North
286 Carolina/A01432566/2013 (dark green) differed from the red cluster at positions 145, 156, and 189
287 and was 7.5 antigenic units away. The two strains colored in purple
288 (A/swine/Nebraska/A01271549/2012 and A/swine/Iowa/A01432500/2013) differed from the red
289 cluster at two amino acid positions (N145K, K189R/S) and were 8 and 9.4 antigenic units away.
290 They differed from each other only at position 189 and are ~1 antigenic unit apart. Thus, 189R was
291 likely antigenically equivalent to 189S with little effect on antigenicity in this background.
292 A/swine/Nebraska/A01241171/2012 (dark pink) differed from the red cluster at positions 145 and
293 189 and was also ~9 antigenic units away.

294 The cyan cluster differed from the red cluster at amino acid positions 155 and 189. The
295 strains colored in brown (A/swine/Indiana/A01202866/2011 and
296 A/swine/Michigan/A01432375/2013), representative of strains that were isolated from both pigs
297 and turkeys, differed from the cyan cluster at amino acid positions 155, 156, 158, 159 and 189 and
298 were 4.4-4.9 antigenic units away. The orange strain (A/swine/Iowa/A01203196/2012) differed
299 from the cyan cluster at positions 145, 156 and 189 and was 4.4 antigenic units away. Thus, despite
300 ongoing genetic evolution at the nucleotide and amino acid level across the entire length of the HA,
301 as few as one or two amino acid substitutions in the HA1 domain were sufficient to change the
302 antigenic properties of the swine influenza A (H3N2) viruses sufficiently to move them between the
303 red or cyan clusters or to define a new antigenic cluster or outlier. The amino acids that
304 distinguished clusters when mapped onto the HA trimer (Figure 1D) were found to be close to the
305 receptor binding site.

306 *Antigenic distance from swine influenza A vaccine strains*

307 To consider the effect this observed antigenic diversity might have on vaccine strain efficacy, we
308 measured the antigenic distance from genetic representatives of putative vaccine strains (the actual
309 strain identity being proprietary information) to currently circulating swine H3N2 viruses. Current
310 vaccine strains in fully licensed swine IAV products are either genetic Cluster I (Figure 2A, orange
311 viruses) or Cluster IV (Figure 2A, red viruses). The most recent vaccine representative from Cluster
312 IV was isolated in 2005. When we measured the antigenic distances from a serum raised to either a
313 Cluster I (Figure 5A) or a Cluster IV (Figure 5B) strain to other currently circulating influenza A
314 H3N2 strains in pigs, we found that all currently circulating strains were greater than 2 antigenic
315 units from the Cluster I vaccine serum, and most strains were over 4 antigenic units away. Within
316 the panel of Cluster IV viruses, we found that some strains were within 2 antigenic units of the
317 putative vaccine serum, but the majority of isolates were greater than 3 antigenic units from the
318 vaccine strain. Therefore, vaccination with Clade I or Clade IV vaccine strains are unlikely to
319 prevent virus infection and/or shedding (e.g., (44)). We also found that the distances from the two
320 putative swine vaccine sera to human seasonal H3N2 strains were over 4 antigenic units in viruses
321 isolated since 1995, and a seasonal strain isolated from humans in 2011 (A/Victoria/361/2011) was
322 6 antigenic units from the Cluster IV serum and 8 antigenic units from the Cluster I serum. Such
323 antigenic distances suggest that future incursions of a current human seasonal H3N2 strain into pigs
324 are unlikely to be mitigated by immunity from either the Cluster I or Cluster IV vaccines currently
325 in use in pigs.

326 *Antigenic distance to human seasonal vaccine strains*

327 We also quantified the antigenic distance between currently circulating swine strains and
328 A/Victoria/361/2011, the most recent human seasonal vaccine strain representative (Figure 5C). We
329 found that all currently circulating swine strains were over 4 antigenic units away from the most
330 recent representative human H3N2, and some as many as 8 antigenic units away, thus future
331 incursions of current swine strains into humans may not be mitigated by immunity to the current
332 human seasonal vaccines.

333 **DISCUSSION**

334 Here, we quantified the antigenic diversity among currently circulating swine and human
335 H3 influenza A viruses using HI assay data and antigenic cartography. The swine H3N2 viruses
336 demonstrated antigenic diversity in the cross-HI assays. In the antigenic maps we saw a clustered
337 antigenic evolution, similar to that shown for the H1 viruses (α , β , γ , δ -1, and δ -2: (28)) with a
338 marked antigenic distance among and between two broad antigenic clusters, demonstrating the
339 substantial antigenic diversity in the milieu of genetically evolving H3N2 viruses circulating in U.S.
340 pigs. Although a previous study utilizing different methodology with a ferret antiserum panel
341 against 8 swine H3N2 viruses identified two antigenic clusters of swine H3N2 from 2006-2012
342 primarily from one U.S. state (20), our study with a serum panel of 18 swine H3N2 covering 12
343 states and major hog producing regions and generated in the natural host demonstrated greater
344 overall antigenic diversity and a greater number of outliers. In addition, our study included
345 representatives from each of the newly emerging phylogenetically defined clusters, contributing
346 significantly to the amount of antigenic diversity we observed.

347 The genetic evolution of both the HA and the NA of H3N2 viruses in pigs was visualized in
348 the ML phylogenetic trees and was consistent with previous analyses (18, 34). However we
349 observed that there was a relative mismatch between the phylogenetic topology of HA and NA,
350 where the NA gene segment was not necessarily consistent with that of the HA gene segment, with
351 the exception of the 2012 and 2013 H3N2v and the Clade IV-F viruses, where there was good
352 correlation between relative tree topology of HA and NA. This suggests that co-evolution between
353 HA and NA pairs may not have an important role in contemporary H3N2 virus fitness, and the
354 inconsistent tree topologies likely arose from frequent reassortment or other ecological or
355 immunological pressures (45).

356 The rate of change in ML likelihood distances of the HA gene in U.S. swine H3N2 of 0.006
357 per year was similar to an estimate of 0.0047 from previously published work on evolution of swine
358 H3N2 viruses in European pigs and 0.006 in human seasonal H3N2 from 1982-2002, reported in

359 the same study (27). However, the overall genetic evolutionary rate in U.S. swine H3N2 from 1997-
360 2013 was weighted by the increased evolution from 2010-2013, following the introduction and
361 subsequent reassortment with the H1N1pdm09. Mutation rates of circulating H3 HA genes also
362 appear to differ between animal hosts. For example, the rate of change of ML-likelihood distances
363 of H3 subtype viruses in horses was 0.002, less than half the rate observed in pigs. This is likely
364 due to a number of factors, including virus, individual host and population factors.

365 The rapid genetic evolution seen with our swine H3 data prompted our investigation into
366 quantifying the impact on antigenic diversity in contemporary U.S. swine H3N2. We found
367 clustered antigenic evolution of H3N2 viruses in pigs from the USA, similar to that previously
368 quantified in European pigs. In Europe, H3N2 viruses continued to circulate and evolve in pigs
369 following the H3 pandemic of 1968 in humans and subsequent introduction into the pig population.
370 Despite similar rates of genetic change, European swine H3N2 viruses evolved 6 times more slowly
371 antigenically than human influenza H3N2 viruses over a similar time period (27). Although H3N2
372 viruses were introduced into North American pigs around 1997 and have continued to circulate,
373 new antigenic variants arose that are antigenically distinct from ancestrally related H3N2 viruses
374 circulating in humans. In addition, we observed far greater antigenic diversity of H3N2 viruses
375 circulating in U.S. pigs in a much shorter time period when compared with viruses circulating in
376 European pigs. Coupled with the antigenic diversity, we observed co-circulation of different
377 antigenic clusters within the pig population, rather than replacement, as seen in human influenza H3
378 evolution. Despite relatively similar genetic evolution rates in North American and European swine
379 H3N2, as well as human seasonal H3N2, the within-host antigenic evolution in pigs in the U.S.
380 does not parallel the antigenic evolutionary patterns of H3N2 viruses in European pigs, people or
381 horses, likely because of host population and virus factors that are currently undetermined.

382 Surprisingly, the substitutions that resulted in marked antigenic differences were attributed
383 in most cases to one or two amino acid changes in the HA-1 domain, located at 6 amino acid
384 positions (145, 155, 156, 158, 159 and 189), strikingly similar to the 7 key amino acid changes

385 recently identified in human antigenic switches from 1968 to 2003: 145, 155, 156, 158, 159, 189,
386 and 193 (43). Furthermore, similarities were also observed between the H3 HA evolution seen in
387 humans, pigs and horses (see Table S4 for direct comparison of observed substitutions in three host
388 species). Although the precise amino acid substitutions differed or were present in different
389 combinations in a particular host species, similar amino acid positions were associated with
390 antigenic cluster-defining substitutions in all three hosts and all were located close to the receptor-
391 binding site. These observations were consistent whether natural host sera were used to characterize
392 the antigenic properties of the viruses as was the case in this study, or when ferret sera were used as
393 a small animal model to characterize H3 viruses circulating in either horses or humans. Of
394 particular note is position 145, which caused the difference between A/Beijing/1992 and
395 A/Wuhan/1995 viruses in humans (43). Here, we observed that
396 A/swine/Minnesota/A01125993/2012 had substitutions at position 145 (N145K) and position 159
397 (Y159N) associated with an antigenic change of 6 antigenic units away from the red cluster. This is
398 remarkably at the same linear amino acid position as the S145N/R substitution associated with the
399 difference between the first and the second antigenic clusters that emerged in European pigs (27).
400 We also found that positions 155 and 189 defined the antigenic difference between the red (155Y:
401 189K) and the cyan (155H: 189R) swine antigenic clusters, whereas Feng, *et. al.* (20) reported only
402 the R189K as defining the two antigenic clusters of U.S. swine H3N2 in that study. The role of the
403 R189K substitution has been explored in swine (46), and this position 189 has been consistently
404 identified as cluster defining in other species as well. In the evolution of equine H3, the European-
405 like cluster was defined from the American-like cluster by the amino acid substitution K189N, -D, -
406 Q, or -E (47). Position 189 was also key in the human influenza A H3 antigenic evolution from
407 A/England/1972 to A/Victoria/1975 and in combination with positions 155 and 159 in the evolution
408 from A/Bangkok/1979 to A/Sichuan/1987 (43). Although position 189 seems to be more
409 consistently identified among different species and in different studies, it is clear that it is not the
410 sole position responsible for cluster-transition substitutions in human (43) and now swine H3N2.

411 While the amino acid positions associated with antigenic variability were conserved among host
412 species, the mechanism by which the individual substitutions act in the different host species is not
413 known. The amino acid changes may cause structural differences in the hemagglutinin leading to
414 receptor binding constraints in different hosts, differences in qualitative and quantitative adaptive
415 immune recognition, or a combination of the above.

416 In the context of the swine humoral response represented by our serum panel and circulating
417 swine H3N2 viruses, contemporary human seasonal H3N2 were shown to have substantial
418 antigenic distance from the contemporary swine H3N2 although these lineages share a common
419 ancestor from the mid-1990s. We showed that between 4 and 8 antigenic units separated the human
420 seasonal vaccine strain representative A/Victoria/361/2011 from all currently circulating strains in
421 pigs. This indicates that despite a potentially high level of immunity against swine H3N2 in the pig
422 population in the U.S., a future incursion of human seasonal H3N2 is possible if the event produced
423 a virus fit for pig-to-pig transmission. The increasing antigenic distance of the A/Victoria/361/2011
424 H3N2 and other previous human seasonal vaccine strains to the contemporary swine H3N2 also
425 suggests the youngest of the human population may become increasingly susceptible to incursions
426 of swine H3N2 due to lack of cross-reacting immunity. Indeed, a dramatic number of H3N2v
427 infections in humans, primarily children, in the USA were detected in 2011-2013 and studies with
428 human sera demonstrated a lack of cross-reacting HI antibodies in children and the elderly (22, 23).
429 Further study of human sera tested against a panel of swine H3N2 representing the antigenic
430 diversity we demonstrate here is required to fully understand the level of human population
431 immunity to H3N2 endemic in the pig population.

432 The marked antigenic diversity seen in H3N2 viruses in pigs since 2010 poses problems in
433 assessing the relative risk of a swine variants emerging in the human population and in using
434 vaccine as an effective means of IAV control in pigs. How differences in host factors alter the
435 relative evolution of viruses in these two hosts is poorly understood, but some factors that might
436 alter the evolutionary pattern of the HA gene within pigs in comparison with H3 in the human

437 population host include differing lifespan and replacement rates of pigs versus humans; more
438 continental separation of pigs compared to humans; and relative spatial separation of sow farms but
439 movement and mixing of weaned pigs to the Midwest from Southeast and Southwest USA and
440 Canada (48). All these factors might lead to different population immunological profiles and thus
441 alter the evolutionary patterns of viruses. This complex immunological profile is exacerbated by a
442 difficulty in updating inactivated vaccines to contain representatives of currently circulating strains
443 and subsequent lack of an ideal vaccine for all situations in pig production.

444 A national surveillance system was established in 2009 by the U.S. Department of
445 Agriculture in response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, the growing diversity of swine viruses, and
446 increasing number of detections of zoonotic events in humans (18). The number of isolates with
447 sequence data from this surveillance stream has grown significantly, building the foundation for
448 systematic sequence analyses to pair with antigenic assessment. Phylogenetic analysis of
449 contemporary H3 suggested increasing evolution since the emergence and subsequent reassortment
450 with the H1N1pdm09 (18, 34), and here we demonstrate the resulting antigenic diversity. The
451 USDA surveillance system and analyses such as ours reported here can now begin to be used to
452 inform vaccine strain selection for swine. However, to improve and further facilitate vaccine strain
453 updates, a vaccine strain selection working group established to collectively provide cross-HI and
454 phylogenetic data from various laboratories and sectors together for interpretation and discussion
455 would be beneficial. Changes in regulatory processes to allow rapid replacement of HA and NA
456 onto approved IAV backbones or platforms would also be extremely useful for improving control
457 measures against influenza A virus in swine. Additionally, platforms not currently available in
458 swine, such as live attenuated influenza vaccines or vectored vaccines, have shown great promise in
459 experimental settings for improved heterologous protection and greater efficacy in the face of
460 maternally derived antibodies (44, 49-54).

461 Here, we found that as few as one or two amino acid substitutions resulted in new antigenic
462 clusters and/or outliers. Since these cluster defining amino acid changes were shown to be enough

463 to result in vaccine failure in other host species, we need to continue to systematically monitor the
464 evolution of swine IAV for vaccine strain updates. Such information is also critical to increase our
465 understanding of what governs the evolutionary mechanisms in different hosts and in improving
466 control measures for influenza A viruses to protect the health and wellbeing of swine, a primary
467 protein food source for humans, as well as the respiratory health of the human population.

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476

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650
651

FIGURE LEGENDS

652 **Figure 1.** 3D antigenic maps of swine influenza A(H3N2) and human influenza A(H3N2) viruses
653 from 1998–2013 and position of key amino acids on the three-dimensional trimeric model of the
654 hemagglutinin protein. The relative positions of isolates (colored spheres) and antisera (open grey
655 cubes) were computed (A) such that the distances between isolates and antisera in the map
656 correspond with the least error to measurements in the HI assay (26). Swine isolate color represents
657 the antigenic cluster to which each isolate belongs and grey spheres represent recent human
658 influenza A (H3N2) viruses. The large grey sphere is A/Victoria/361/2011. The white scale bar
659 represents 1 unit of antigenic distance, corresponding to a twofold dilution of antiserum in the HI
660 assay. Antigenic maps with only swine influenza A(H3N2) viruses showing the antigenic effect of
661 the amino acid substitutions for each antigenic variant that was not located within the red (B) or the
662 cyan (C) antigenic clusters. The arrows radiate from the consensus in each cluster to the outlying
663 antigen and numeric values show the number of antigenic units separating the outlier from the
664 antigens representing the consensus. A trimeric structure of A/Swine/Illinois/A01241469/2012 (red
665 antigenic cluster) was generated to demonstrate the location of the antigenic-determining amino
666 acid positions (D). The receptor binding site was colored wheat. An α 2,6 glycan (LSTc) is shown
667 docked in the binding site as sticks. The six amino acid positions associated with antigenic outliers
668 were colored red. Images were produced using PyMOL (33).

669

670 **Figure 2.** Maximum likelihood phylogenies (A and B) and genetic maps (C and D) of
671 representative H3N2 swine influenza A isolates using HA1 domain amino acid sequences. Numbers
672 above or below branches in the phylogenetic trees indicate bootstrap support (%) estimated from
673 1,000 resamplings of the sequence data; bootstrap values $\leq 50\%$ are not shown. H3N2 HA
674 sublineages are indicated by bolded square parentheses (Cluster I, II, II, and IV-A/B/C/D/E/F).
675 Taxon names indicate viral isolate, followed by Genbank or GISAID EpiFlu accession identifiers in
676 parentheses. Branches were colored by genetic cluster (A) and antigenic cluster (B); branches in

677 light grey were not part of antigenic study. Scale bars in the phylogenies indicate amino acid
 678 substitutions per site. Genetic maps were made from pairwise differences among strains and spheres
 679 representing virus strains were colored by genetic cluster (C) or antigenic cluster (D). The white
 680 scale bars in the genetic maps correspond to 5 amino acid substitutions.

681

682 **Figure 3.** Maximum likelihood phylogeny of neuraminidase (NA) gene amino acid sequences from
 683 viruses in the antigenic study and representative H3N2 swine influenza A isolates. Branches were
 684 colored by HA genetic cluster; branches in light grey were not part of study. Numbers above or
 685 below branches in the phylogenetic trees indicate bootstrap support (%) estimated from 1,000
 686 resamplings of the sequence data; bootstrap values $\leq 50\%$ are not shown. H3N2 NA sublineages are
 687 indicated by bolded square parentheses (1998 vs. 2002). Taxon names indicate viral isolate,
 688 followed by Genbank or GISAID EpiFlu accession identifiers in parentheses. Scale bar in the
 689 phylogeny indicates amino acid substitutions.

690

691 **Figure 4.** Patristic distance from A/Wuhan/359/95 in the maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree
 692 presented in Figure S1 to each isolate in Cluster IV H3N2 swine influenza A virus clade plotted as a
 693 function of time. The solid line represents the regression for the three years prior to 2009 with a
 694 slope of 0.003 (x -intercept = -7.84 ± 1.31 S.E.; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.30$; p -value < 0.0001) whereas the
 695 hatched line represents the regression for the isolates from 2010-present with a slope of 0.005 (x -
 696 intercept = -10.40 ± 0.68 S.E.; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.31$; p -value < 0.0001).

697

698 **Figure 5.** Antigenic distances from putative Cluster I (A) and Cluster IV (B) swine vaccine sera and
 699 antigenic distance from the human seasonal vaccine strain A/Victoria/361/2011 (C) swine sera to
 700 circulating strains in pigs by year.

701

702 **Table 1.** Viruses used to raise reference antisera in swine (underlined) and test antigens in the
 703 hemagglutination inhibition (HI) assay.

Viruses	H3 Cluster	Virus propagation	H3 Accession
Swine			
<u>A/swine/Texas/4199-2/1998</u>	H3-I	MDCK	CY095675
<u>A/swine/Colorado/23619/1999</u>	H3-II	MDCK	AF268128
<u>A/swine/Minnesota/01146/2006</u>	H3-IV	MDCK	CY099035
<u>A/swine/Iowa/01700/2007</u>	H3-IV	MDCK	CY099027
<u>A/swine/Minnesota/02782/2009</u>	H3-IV	MDCK	CY099103
<u>A/swine/Illinois/02907/2009</u>	H3-IV	MDCK	KF739390
<u>A/swine/Pennsylvania/A01076777/2010</u>	H3-IV	MDCK	JF263535
<u>A/swine/New York/A01104005/2011</u>	H3-IV (A)	MDCK	JN940422
<u>A/swine/Indiana/A00968373/2012</u>	H3-IV (A)	MDCK	JX534982
A/swine/Illinois/A01241469/2012	H3-IV (A)	MDCK	JX422497
A/swine/Michigan/A01259000/2012	H3-IV (A)	MDCK-L	JX442056
A/swine/Wyoming/A01444562/2013	H3-IV (A)	MDCK	KC562197
A/swine/North_Carolina/A01432566/2013	H3-IV (A)	MDCK	KC841842
A/swine/Minnesota/A01300213/2012	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	JX657030
A/swine/Minnesota/A01125993/2012	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	JX422257
A/swine/Minnesota/A01327922/2012	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	JX422521
A/swine/Iowa/A01300195/2012	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	JX657018
<u>A/swine/Minnesota/A01432544/2013</u>	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	KC841830
<u>A/swine/Minnesota/A01280592/2013</u>	H3-IV (B)	MDCK	KC589443
<u>A/swine/Indiana/A01202866/2011</u>	H3-IV (C)	MDCK	JX092535
<u>A/swine/Michigan/A01432375/2013</u>	H3-IV (C)	MDCK	KC534987
<u>A/swine/Illinois/A01201606/2011</u>	H3-IV (D)	MDCK	CY107066
<u>A/swine/Iowa/A01202613/2011</u>	H3-IV (D)	MDCK-L	JX092307
A/swine/Iowa/A01202889/2011	H3-IV (D)	MDCK-L	JX092542
A/swine/Iowa/A01203196/2012	H3-IV (D)	MDCK-L	JQ739697
A/swine/Michigan/A01203498/2012	H3-IV (D)	MDCK	JX163265
<u>A/swine/Iowa/A01049750/2011</u>	H3-IV (F)	MDCK	JN652493
<u>A/swine/Texas/A01049914/2011</u>	H3-IV (F)	MDCK	JN652507
A/swine/Illinois/A01241066/2012	H3-IV (F)	MDCK	JX422557
A/swine/Iowa/A01203121/2012	H3-IV (F)	MDCK-L	JX092555
A/swine/Nebraska/A01241171/2012	H3-IV (F)	MDCK-L	JX422575
A/swine/Nebraska/A01271549/2012	H3-IV (F)	MDCK	KC222305

<u>A/swine/Iowa/A01432500/2013</u>	H3-IV (F)	MDCK	KC755694
Human			
<u>A/Wuhan/359/1995</u>	Vaccine strain (1996-1998)	MDCK-L	AY661190
<u>A/Sydney/5/1997</u>	Vaccine strain (1998-2000)	MDCK-L	CY039079
<u>A/Moscow/10/1999</u>	Vaccine strain (2000-2004)	MDCK-L	AY531035
<u>A/Fujian/411/2002</u>	Vaccine strain (2004-2005)	MDCK-L	EF541397
<u>A/Wisconsin/67/2005</u>	Vaccine strain (2006-2008)	MDCK-L	CY034116
<u>A/Brisbane/10/2007</u>	Vaccine strain (2008-2010)	Egg	CY039087
<u>A/Perth/16/2009</u>	Vaccine strain (2010-2012)	Egg	GQ293081
<u>A/Victoria/361/2011</u>	Vaccine strain (2012-2013)	Egg	KC306165
<u>A/Indiana/08/2011</u>	H3N2v: H3-IV(A)	MDCK	JN638733

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