

Swine Flu Is Now in 33 Countries, W.H.O. Says

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Swine flu has reached 33 countries, the World Health Organization said Wednesday, and there have been deaths in four nations: Mexico, the United States, Canada and Costa Rica. The agency, based in Geneva, is under pressure to change how it issues pandemic alerts, which go up as a new virus spreads even if it is relatively mild. But Dr. Sylvie Briand of the W.H.O.'s global flu program said it would be "not very helpful" to switch to alerts like those for hurricanes, which are based on wind speeds. A virus's severity, she said, varies from country to country, depending on the population's previous immunity, average age, the level of readiness of the health care system and the prevalence of diseases that could make people more vulnerable.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/health/14briefs-flureport.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print