
PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Virus

June 26, 2024

Situation

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has reported detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A (HPAI) H5N1 virus in U.S. dairy cattle in multiple states. In April 2024, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed the first known human infection when a dairy worker in Texas who had close contact with sick cattle tested positive. Two additional cases of H5N1 were reported in May 2024. No H5N1 cases have been identified in California at this time.

CDC believes the current risk these viruses pose to the public is low. However, people with job-related or recreational exposures to infected birds, cattle, or other animals are at higher risk of infection and should take appropriate precautions.

While there have not been any cattle-related H5N1 exposures in Riverside County, Public Health has maintained an active role over the years in monitoring the health of individuals exposed to Avian Influenza from birds upon state and/or CDC notification.

Avian Influenza in Humans

Clinical Criteria

Exposure to an infected animal or person within 10 days prior to illness onset.

- Persons with signs and symptoms consistent with acute upper or lower respiratory tract infection
- Complications of acute respiratory illness without another identified cause
- Gastrointestinal symptoms
- Conjunctivitis

Laboratory Testing of Exposed Symptomatic Individuals

- **Specimen collection**
Specimens should ideally be collected within 24-72 hours of symptom onset and no later than 10 days after symptom onset. Please complete the Influenza Submission Form, [Influenza Submission Form](#), and submit with specimen.

- **Preferred Specimens**
CONJUNCTIVITIS Specimen: Individuals that meet clinical and epidemiological criteria for influenza A (H5N1) with conjunctivitis (with or without respiratory symptoms) should have two swabs collected as well. 1 conjunctival swab, and 1 NP swab.
RESPIRATORY Specimen: A nasopharyngeal swab, a nasal swab, a throat swab, or dual nasopharyngeal/throat swabs combined into one vial of viral transport medium (VTM); also acceptable: a nasal aspirate or nasal wash.
- **Specimen Storage and Handling**
 Refrigerate specimens at 2-8° or freeze at -20°C after collection. Ship refrigerated specimens to RUHS Public Health Lab on cold packs within 72 hours after collection.

Recommendations for Infection Control

- Standard, contact, and airborne precautions are required for patients presenting for medical care or evaluation who have illness consistent with influenza and recent exposure to potentially infected animals.
- For more California-specific information on infection control requirements in health care settings, please see [California's Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard](#).

Actions Requested

1. **Stay up to date** on the HPAI developments in the United States. CDC updates are located at: <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/spotlights/h5n1-response-06212024.html>.
2. **Consider** HPAI A(H5N1) virus infection in people showing signs or symptoms of acute respiratory illness or conjunctivitis and who have relevant exposure history outlined in, [Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Animals; Interim Recommendations for Prevention, Monitoring, and Public Health Investigations](#).
3. **Report** suspected HPAI (H5N1) cases to Disease Control immediately by calling 951-358-5107 (Monday – Friday 8 AM to 5 PM) or 951-792-2974 (after business hours, weekends, or County observed holidays).

Resources

National

- [Evaluating and Managing Patients Exposed to Avian Influenza A Viruses of Public Health Concern | CDC](#)
- [Questions and Answers Regarding Milk Safety During Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreaks | FDA](#)
- [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock | USDA](#)

California

- [Avian influenza Updates | CDFA](#)
- [Avian and Novel Influenza Quick sheet | CDPH](#)