

Animal Health Alert: H5 Bird Flu confirmed in three additional domestic cats in Los Angeles County and in one commercially available raw pet food product.
1.13.2025

Key Points:

- Five indoor-only cats in one household experienced acute onset of illness after consuming two brands of commercially available raw pet food. Four of the cats had severe clinical signs and two of them died. One cat had mild clinical signs. One of the severely affected cats was tested and later confirmed to be infected with H5N1 (aka H5 bird flu). Both raw pet food diets were tested, and one of the two raw pet foods, [Monarch Raw Pet Food, was confirmed to contain live, infective, H5N1 virus.](#)
- In a second single-cat household, the indoor-only cat had acute onset of illness after consuming three different brands of commercially available raw pet food. This cat was tested and confirmed to be infected with H5 bird flu. The investigation is ongoing and testing of the raw pet food by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is currently underway.
- Influenza A is rarely detected in cats. These are the first cats in LA County to be confirmed positive for H5 bird flu after consuming raw pet food products.
- Five other cats from two different households in LA County have also been confirmed with H5 bird flu after drinking raw milk for human consumption that was part of a recall due to H5 bird flu contamination. All five of these cats died from H5 bird flu.
- H5 bird flu is a One Health issue that significantly affects human health, animal health and the environment. ***Veterinarians should strongly advise pet owners to not consume nor feed raw dairy, raw meat, raw poultry, and raw pet food diets to pets.***
- **REPORT** suspected cases of H5 bird flu in cats and other animals. See the [Guidance for Veterinary Practices with Suspect H5 Bird Flu Cases in Pets](#). Influenza A testing is available through commercial diagnostic laboratories. Testing through Public Health may be available for certain cases. Take a complete dietary history (including any raw dairy, raw poultry and/or meat including raw pet food diets, and wild bird exposure).

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

In Los Angeles County, there have now been 7 laboratory confirmed cases of H5 bird flu in cats. Five cats with confirmed H5 bird flu consumed raw milk that was part of a recall due to H5 bird flu contamination. Two cats with confirmed H5 bird flu consumed commercially available raw pet food products. There have been multiple H5 bird flu probable and suspected cases in cats that either consumed raw pet food or raw milk and became acutely ill, but not all cats were able to be tested.

As part of the epidemiologic investigation and when available from the owners, the pet foods fed to the suspected and confirmed cases of H5 bird flu are being tested through federal

partners. One commercially available raw pet food, Monarch Raw Pet food, tested positive for H5 bird flu, with live infective virus isolated from the samples. The product is sold at several farmers markets in southern California, and do not have lot numbers, nor Best Before dates. Testing is still pending on several additional commercially available raw pet foods that were consumed by cats that became acutely ill and then tested positive for H5 bird flu.

Testing options if you suspect a case:

Commercial testing for influenza in cats is available through veterinary diagnostic laboratories. Public health is offering testing in cases that are highly suspicious for H5 bird flu – those with a clear epidemiologic link plus acute onset of significant compatible clinical signs. A clear epidemiologic link includes confirmed history of consumption of raw milk, raw pet food, or raw poultry/meat. Significant compatible clinical signs include fever, severe lethargy, loss of appetite, acute respiratory disease, acute neurologic disease, hepatopathy/icterus, uveitis. Please reach out to Veterinary Public Health for further assistance with testing. See the [Guidance for Veterinary Practices with Suspect H5 Bird Flu Cases in Pets](#).

With scientific evidence of the linkage between contaminated raw products and cats developing severe or fatal H5 bird flu infection, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) recommends veterinarians strongly advise pet owners not to feed pets raw pet food diets, raw meat, raw poultry, and raw milk due to the risks associated with H5 bird flu.

H5 bird flu in cats that consumed raw pet food

Approximately 1-2 weeks after beginning to consume two commercially available raw food pet diets, all cats in a household of five strictly indoor-only cats became ill. Two of the five cats experienced acute respiratory distress and were humanely euthanized. Clinical signs in the cats included: upper respiratory symptoms, lethargy, reduced appetite, pollakiuria, ataxia, corneal edema, uveitis, and retinal detachment leading to permanent vision loss. As part of initial diagnostics, one severely ill cat had a respiratory PCR panel performed by a commercial veterinary laboratory, which came back positive for influenza A. The cat's sample was retested and influenza A positive at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory (CAHFS). The sample was then sent to the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) where whole genome sequencing (WGS) was performed and was confirmed to be positive for H5 bird flu (H5N1). The owner had unopened and opened packages of both commercially available raw pet foods that were fed to the cats. These samples were provided to the Animal Diagnostic Center laboratory of Cornell University where testing was performed in partnership with the FDA. Testing confirmed that product samples of both the opened and unopened Monarch Raw Pet food were infected with live and infective influenza A H5N1 virus.

In a separate single-cat household, a strictly indoor-only domestic cat was confirmed positive for H5 bird flu on December 31, 2024. The cat was fed three different brands of commercially available poultry-based raw pet foods. No pre-existing illness was identified prior to the cat becoming sick. Symptoms in this cat included fever, lethargy, anorexia, and acute wheezing. The cat remained hospitalized on oxygen for several days, was released and is recovering from

illness. A respiratory PCR panel resulted positive for influenza A at a commercial laboratory, and both oropharyngeal and rectal swabs tested through Los Angeles County DPH were confirmed by NVSL as positive for H5 bird flu. The investigation is ongoing and testing of the raw pet food diets is currently underway by the FDA. Household members and veterinary clinic staff who had contact with the cat are also being monitored for symptoms of flu.

H5 Bird Flu in cats that consumed raw milk products

To date, in LA County, there have been two separate households with confirmed positive H5 bird flu in cats following the consumption of recalled raw milk products. In early December 2024, seven cats from one household became ill and five died in LA County after drinking the recalled raw milk sold for human consumption. On December 22, 2024, a cat from a different household was submitted for rabies testing after it died following the acute onset of severe neurologic signs (anorexia, disorientation, ataxia, confusion, circling, and seizures). Following a negative rabies test, a brain swab was collected and confirmed by NVSL to be positive for H5N1. Further investigation revealed that this cat lived in a household of eight indoor/outdoor cats that also had been offered milk from Raw Farm LLC in late November 2024; however, it was unclear how many cats had consumed the raw milk in this household. Over a period of three days, three of the eight cats in this household had become acutely ill and died, and only the one cat referenced above was tested for influenza.

Veterinary Public Health extends sincere condolences to the families and pet owners of these cats that passed or that were affected by bird flu. We sincerely appreciate the time and efforts from pet owners who provided information about their households and provided samples of raw products for testing with the goal of protecting other animals and other families from contracting this disease.

Guidance for Veterinary Practices

- **Strongly advise pet owners not to consume nor feed their pets raw dairy, raw meat, raw poultry, or raw pet food diets.** Share information about the [risks to both human and pet health when feeding raw diets](#).
- **Stay aware of recalls and share them with pet owners.** Both pet products and human grade products that are fed to pets may be recalled:
 - [FDA Recalls, Market Withdrawals and Safety Alerts](#)
 - [California Department of Public Health – Food and Drug Branch](#)
- **Identify potential cases of H5 bird flu in pets.**
 - Take a detailed diet history for any sick pet.
 - Determine whether exposure to H5 Bird Flu may have occurred through consumption of raw pet food or raw products (especially if product has been recalled), or via predation of wild birds.
 - This is especially important if the pet has fever, severe lethargy, loss of appetite, icterus, hepatopathy, respiratory symptoms, uveitis, or neurologic signs such as seizures, nystagmus, or blindness.

Additional recommendations and a [detailed guidance for veterinary practices](#) is available and can be printed out for use. Veterinarians and animal health workers are encouraged to contact us with any questions by email: vet@ph.lacounty.gov, or by phone: 213-288-7060 (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm). Please visit our [VPH webpage for more information about H5 bird flu](#).

H5 Bird Flu Situation

The H5 bird flu virus is causing a severe panzootic. Traditionally it primarily infects birds and poultry, but has now been detected in [dairy cattle and other mammals throughout the nation](#), and continues to be detected in birds and mammals in multiple regions around the world including in both polar regions. This large range of infected animal species worldwide highlights the potential for the virus to mutate and become more transmissible among animals, including humans. In the US, there have been 66 confirmed H5 bird flu human cases reported, including one fatal human case.

Currently, there is no evidence of local cat-to-cat, cat-to-human or human-to-human spread of H5 bird flu, and the risk to the general public continues to be low. However, people who come into close contact with animals, especially wild birds and their feces, infected cats, infected poultry, or infected dairy cattle or their milk, have a greater risk of exposure. It is important to take proper precautions, as described above.

Select Resources:

LAC DPH Press Releases - H5 Bird Flu

- LA County Department of Public Health News Release – December 31, 2024 – [Public Health Warns Against Feeding Pets Raw Food Following H5 Bird Flu Virus Detection](#)
- LA County Department of Public Health News Release – December 19, 2024 – [Public Health Warns Against Consuming Raw Milk Following Additional Detections of H5 Bird Flu Virus](#)
- LA County Department of Public Health News Release – December 18, 2024 – [Updated: Confirmed H5 Bird Flu Detected in Los Angeles County Cats that Consumed Recalled Raw Milk – Public Health Investigating Additional Possible Cases in Cats](#)

Raw Product Recalls – H5 Bird Flu

- Oregon Department of Agriculture Press Release – December 26, 2024 – [Northwest Natural of Portland Voluntary Recall of Northwest Naturals Brand 2lb Feline Turkey Recipe Raw & Frozen Pet Food Due to HPAI Contamination](#).
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) - Raw Milk Recall Notice - 12/3/2024 – Raw Farm LLC. [State Secures Broad Voluntary Recall of Raw Milk and Cream to Protect Consumers](#)

- California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) – Raw Milk Recall Notice - 12/14/24 – Valley Milk Simply Bottled of Stanislaus County - <https://pressreleases.cdfa.ca.gov/Home/PressRelease/63398203>

H5 Bird Flu

- LA County Veterinary Public Health Program (VPH) - [H5 Bird Flu in Los Angeles County](#)
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) – [Current Bird Flu Situation](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Considerations for Veterinarians: Evaluating and Handling of Cats Potentially Exposed to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A \(H5N1\) Virus](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Influenza in Animals](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation](#)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) – [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Mammals](#)

Veterinary Public Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
(213) 288-7060
vet@ph.lacounty.gov
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>

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