

**Animal Health Advisory: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 Update:
California Dairy Farm Outbreaks and Missouri Human Case
9.9.2024**

Key Points:

- The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory confirmed that three dairy farm herds in the Central Valley have tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1.
- No human cases have been detected in relation to these California dairy farm outbreaks.
- Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed a human case of H5 avian influenza reported by the state of Missouri through the state's seasonal flu surveillance system.
- This human case is the first case of H5 avian influenza without a known occupational exposure to sick or infected animals.

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

HPAI H5N1 has been detected in three dairy farms in the Central Valley of California. The virus has been found in birds throughout the state, including in wild birds in LA County, but had not been detected in dairy cattle in California until now. The herds started showing clinical signs consistent with H5N1 on August 25, 2024, and were confirmed positive on August 30. No associated human cases have been detected, and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is working with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to monitor people who were exposed to the sick cows. Including these three herds, HPAI H5N1 has now been detected in a total 197 herds in 14 states.

The USDA and CDFA have put into place movement restrictions and requirements prior to the transport of lactating dairy cattle both between and within states. Pasteurization of milk is effective at inactivating the virus and it is safe to consume pasteurized milk and dairy items, as well as properly handled meat and eggs. It is recommended that raw milk and raw dairy products not be consumed by people, nor fed to pets.

Since Sept 2022, a total of 34 infected wild birds have been detected in LA County, with the most recent one being a gull found in Manhattan Beach in January 2024. To date, no other mammals in LA County have tested positive for the virus. While primarily affecting poultry, HPAI H5N1 infections in cattle and other mammals highlight the potential for the virus to mutate and become more transmissible among mammals, including humans.

On September 6, 2024, CDC confirmed a human case of H5 avian influenza reported by the state of Missouri. There is no known animal exposure history with this case, and no ongoing transmission among close contacts has been identified. Although this patient was hospitalized with underlying medical conditions, they were successfully treated with influenza antiviral medications, and have subsequently recovered. This is the 14th human case of H5 influenza reported in the United States during 2024 and the first case without a known occupational exposure to sick or infected animals. There have not been H5 avian influenza outbreaks reported in cattle in Missouri this year, however the virus has been reported in commercial and backyard poultry flocks, and H5N1 has been detected in wild birds in that state in the past.

The risk to the general public from H5N1 remains low. The results of this investigation will be particularly important in light of the current lack of an obvious animal exposure. While rare, there have been novel influenza A cases where an animal source cannot be identified. It is important to note that in these situations no onward transmission between people has been reported.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health requests your continued assistance in monitoring for potential HPAI H5N1 cases in birds and mammals. Report potential HPAI cases in birds, cats and other mammals presenting with neurologic signs if they have had exposure to wild birds, to raw dairy products or raw meat, or if they have had exposure to dairy cattle. We will work with your veterinary practice to arrange sample testing. Report sick or dead wild birds in the community to your local animal control agency – in some cases they might be able to collect the wild bird and hold it for testing by our program.

Please visit our VPH webpage for more information about HPAI H5N1 (link provided below). You may always contact us with any questions by email: vet@ph.lacounty.gov, or by phone: 213-288-7060 (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm).

Resources:

- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in Los Angeles County.
<http://ph.lacounty.gov/vet/HPAI.htm>
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Avian Influenza – Situation Summary - <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-flu-summary.htm>
- California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) - Avian Influenza
https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Avian_Influenza.html
- USDA - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Detections in Livestock .
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>
- USDA – Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Detections in Mammals
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/mammals>

Sincerely,

Veterinary Public Health
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
313 N. Figueroa St, Room 1127
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 288-7060
(213) 481-2375 Fax
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/>

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