

***What is Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)?***

HPAI is a disease that is highly contagious and often deadly in poultry, caused by highly pathogenic avian influenza A (H5) and A (H7) viruses; it is also known as bird or avian flu. HPAI viruses can be transmitted by wild birds to domestic poultry and other bird and animal species.

In March, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that they had found HPAI infected cows at a dairy farm in Texas. The USDA, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with state partners, are investigating an outbreak of HPAI virus impacting dairy cows in multiple states.

***What is the risk to human health?***

The CDC reports the current risk to the general public is low. People with job-related or recreational exposures to birds or other H5 virus-infected animals, are at greater risk of infection. People with job-related or recreational exposures to birds or infected mammals should take appropriate precautions to protect against bird flu, available [here](#).

Avian influenza Type A viruses do not normally infect people, but rare cases of human infection have occurred. In April 2024, one human case of influenza A (H5N1) infection was reported in Texas, following exposure to infected dairy cattle.

The CDC's food safety group and surveillance team are monitoring emergency department data and flu testing data for any unusual trends in flu-like illness. To date, surveillance systems do not show any unusual trends or activity.

***What are the current recommendations?***

The CDC and FDA continue to advise against the consumption of raw milk ([unpasteurized milk](#)). These agencies have long standing information regarding the increased risk of foodborne illness associated with pathogens that may be present in unpasteurized milk. The risk of human infection from drinking raw milk containing live A(H5N1) virus is unknown.

People should avoid unprotected (not using respiratory or eye protection) exposures to sick or dead animals including wild birds, poultry, other domesticated birds, and other wild or domesticated animals, as well as with animal feces, litter, or materials contaminated by birds or other animals with suspected or confirmed HPAI A(H5N1) virus infection.

***What is pasteurization?***

Pasteurization is a process that kills harmful bacteria and viruses by heating milk to a specific temperature to make milk safer. Results from FDA testing provide evidence that pasteurization is effective in inactivating HPAI H5N1, confirming the commercial milk supply is safe.

***Where can I find more information?***

The information in this FAQ is sourced from the FDA, CDC, and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). For more information, click [here](#) (FDA), click [here](#) (CDC), and click [here](#) (DPH).

We will continue to monitor the status of avian influenza and provide updates as more information becomes available. Please feel free to reach out with any questions!