

H5N1 AVIAN FLU SAFETY PROTOCOL FOR OUTREACH TO ANIMAL PRODUCTION WORKERS

Last Updated: September 10, 2024

NATIONAL CENTER FOR FARMWORKER HEALTH

Prior to doing any type of outreach to animal production workers, it's important that all staff participate in H5N1 awareness training with your organization or a partner organization, so you are familiar with how people get exposed to H5N1, how to avoid becoming exposed, and what the signs and symptoms of H5N1 illness are in animals and humans. See the table below for signs and symptoms of H5N1 illness.

Table 1. Signs & Symptoms of H5N1 in Humans, Cattle, and Poultry

Humans	Cattle	Poultry
Red eyes (conjunctivitis) Fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or more) Cough Sore throat Runny/stuffy nose Muscle or body aches Headaches Fatigue Difficult breathing Pneumonia Less common symptoms include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and seizures.	Poor appetite Reduced milk production Abnormal milk (thickened or discolored) Clear nasal discharge	Sudden death Low energy Poor appetite Purple discoloration or swelling of different body parts Reduced egg production Abnormal eggs (misshapen or soft shells) Nasal discharge Coughing Sneezing Lack of coordination Diarrhea

Below are safety recommendations for conducting outreach to animal production workers on farms and at community and housing sites.

ON-FARM OUTREACH SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations apply if you are visiting dairy or poultry farms that are infected with H5N1 or could potentially be infected with H5N1. Because animal testing and surveillance is not currently rigorous across the U.S., it may be prudent to treat all dairy and poultry farms as potentially infected, especially if the farm has signs of infection, such as decreased milk production in cows and sick or dying cats or wild birds on the farm. NCFH recommends minimizing outreach directly at farms if animal production workers can instead be reached at housing or community sites.

Generally, if a farm has documented H5N1 cases in animals or people, you should avoid visiting the farm unless it is absolutely necessary, and instead seek alternative locations to meet with workers, such as a local grocery store or park.

1. Use Personal Protective Equipment

a. If you will be near animals, such as inside a dairy parlor or next to a feed lot, or you will potentially be speaking with workers who may be unwell or have symptoms of H5N1, use the following PPE:

- Any [NIOSH approved particulate respirator](#) (includes N95s). Before wearing an N95 respirator, please [review the CDC's instructions and fact sheet](#). You can also [learn about donning and doffing with seal checks through this YouTube video](#).
- Fluid-resistant coveralls
- Properly fitted unvented/indirectly vented safety goggles
- Face shield if there is a high chance of cow's milk splashing in your face
- Gloves
- Head/hair cover
- Rubber boots or boot covers

b. If you will not be near any animals or inside any buildings that house animals, and you are only speaking with workers who are healthy and do not have any symptoms of H5N1, use the following PPE:

- Any NIOSH approved particulate respirator (includes N95s)
- Gloves
- Rubber boots or boot covers

While wearing PPE, avoid eating, drinking, smoking or using the bathroom.

Heat stress may also be a concern if you are conducting outreach when the weather is warm or hot, especially if you are using PPE. You'll need to take frequent breaks and drink extra water and electrolytes, because the PPE will make it harder for your body to cool down. You should also have a buddy system with your outreach partner so you can help each other check for signs of heat-related illnesses and get medical attention if needed. You can see other recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/recommendations.html>

2. Stay Clean

- Keep all open wounds (cuts and scratches) covered with water-proof bandages.
- Keep your belongings in your vehicle to avoid leaving it on a surface on the farm where it could get contaminated.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, face, or your phone while at the farm.
- Practice good hand hygiene by thoroughly washing your hands:
 - Before and after work, breaks, and eating;
 - After contact with livestock, raw meat, raw milk, feces, or any animal products;
 - After contact with people who have signs and symptoms of influenza; and
 - After putting on or taking off PPE.

3. Stop Virus Spread - Be careful to avoid spreading H5N1 between farms!

- Remove PPE following the [CDC guidance sequence](#), and dispose of PPE immediately thereafter. For reusable PPE, clean until dirt is removed, disinfect according to the disinfectant and PPE manufacturer's instructions and set aside in a clean/disinfected bag for future use. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water afterwards.
- Wipe down your footwear with disinfecting wipes and dispose of the wipes or boot covers before entering your car.
- If possible, park your car away from the farm property to avoid contaminating your tires.
- Do not drive your car onto another farm property before washing the tires thoroughly. It is possible that your tires could pick up material that has the virus and spread it to another farm.

4. Take Care of Your Health

- Get vaccinated for normal seasonal influenza if you can. The [seasonal flu vaccine](#) does not protect against infection with H5N1 but can reduce the risk of your immune system having to fight off multiple types of flu virus at the same time.
- [Self-monitor](#) for symptoms of illness every day for 10 days after the last day of exposure to infected or potentially infected animals, people, or contaminated materials. If you become sick during those 10 days, isolate yourself, tell your supervisor, and get instructions for seeking medical evaluation and treatment.
- If you are worried about your health, or if you develop any symptoms of H5N1 after visiting a farm, speak with a health care provider and tell them about your visit to the farm, what types of PPE you used, and if you were around animals or people with symptoms of H5N1. Your health care provider will do a medical evaluation and may recommend influenza testing and antiviral treatment.

COMMUNITY & HOUSING SITE OUTREACH SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations apply if you are conducting outreach to dairy and poultry workers at local community sites, like laundromats, grocery stores, churches, or at workers' off-farm housing. These recommendations assume you are not in direct contact with workers who have symptoms of H5N1. If you think workers may have symptoms of H5N1, see recommendations at the end of this list.

For this type of outreach, you do not have to use PPE, but you may choose to wear a surgical mask or N95 respirator. Keep N95 respirators on hand when you do outreach in case you meet a worker with symptoms. Be sure to dispose of the mask when you are done and wash your hands with soap and water after disposing of it.

1. Stay Clean

- Keep all open wounds (cuts and scratches) covered with water-proof bandages.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose, face, or your phone while conducting outreach.
- Practice good hand hygiene by thoroughly washing your hands:
 - Before and after work, breaks, and eating;
 - After contact with people who have signs and symptoms of influenza; and
 - After putting on or taking off PPE (if you choose to wear a mask).

2. Take Care of Your Health

- Get vaccinated for normal seasonal influenza if you can. The [seasonal flu vaccine](#) does not protect against infection with H5N1 but can reduce the risk of your immune system having to fight off multiple types of flu virus at the same time.
- If you are worried about your health, or if you develop any symptoms of H5N1 after conducting outreach, speak with a health care provider and tell them about your work, what types of PPE you used, and if you were around animals or people with symptoms of H5N1. Your health care provider will do a medical evaluation and may recommend influenza testing and antiviral treatment.

If a worker has symptoms of H5N1, we recommend that you speak to them remotely, through a telephone or video call. If it's necessary to speak with them in person at a housing or community site, then speak with them outdoors if possible and use the following PPE:

- Any NIOSH approved particulate respiratory (includes N95s)
- Gloves
- Properly fitted unvented/indirectly vented safety goggles

Remove PPE following the [CDC guidance sequence](#), and dispose of PPE immediately thereafter.

It's very important that you [self-monitor](#) for symptoms of illness every day for 10 days after speaking with the worker. If you become sick during those 10 days, isolate yourself, tell your supervisor, and get instructions for seeking medical evaluation and treatment.

Guidelines adapted on 9/10/2024 from:

[CDC guidance on reducing risk for people working with or exposed to animals](#)

[USDA HPAI \(H5N1\) information](#)