



## Influenza (Flu)

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# Current H5N1 Bird Flu Situation in Dairy Cows



## Domestic Summary

A multi-state outbreak of HPAI A(H5N1) bird flu in dairy cows [was first reported](#) on March 25, 2024. This is the first time that these bird flu viruses were found in cattle. [CDC confirmed one human HPAI A\(H5N1\) infection](#) that had exposure to dairy cattle in Texas that were presumed to be infected with the virus. While thought to be rare, this exposure to HPAI A(H5N1) bird flu virus is the first instance of likely mammal to human transmission.

In the United States, since 2022, USDA APHIS has reported HPAI A(H5N1) virus detections [in more than 200 mammals](#).

## Background

While rare, mammals can be infected with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) (“H5N1 bird flu”) viruses. Reports of these sporadic infections in mammals have occurred globally amid widespread outbreaks of bird flu infections in wild birds and poultry.

Mammals can be infected with H5N1 bird flu viruses when they eat infected birds, poultry, or other animals and/or if they are exposed to environments contaminated with virus. Spread of H5N1 bird flu viruses from mammal to mammal is thought to be rare, but possible.

## Global Summary

Globally, sporadic HPAI A(H5N1) virus infections in mammals have been reported across the continents of Asia, North America, South America, and Europe. More information about the global impact of avian influenza can be found here: [Avian Influenza – WOA – World Organisation for Animal Health](#).

Specifically, recent HPAI A(H5N1) infections in mammals have been detected in sea lions in Peru and Chile, sea elephants in Argentina, and foxes in Canada, France, and other countries. A list of significant HPAI outbreaks, including in mammals, can be found here: [Highlights in the History of Avian Influenza \(Bird Flu\) Timeline – 2020-2024](#).


## Risk to Humans

The wide geographic spread of HPAI A(H5N1) viruses in wild birds, poultry, and some other mammals, including in cows, could create additional opportunities for people to be exposed to these viruses. Therefore, there could be an increase in sporadic human infections resulting from bird and animal exposures, even if the risk of these viruses spreading from birds to people has not increased. CDC believes the current risk to the general public from bird flu viruses is low. People who have job-related or recreational exposure to infected birds or animals, including cows, are at greater risk of contracting HPAI A(H5N1) virus. CDC has recommendations related to testing, treatment of HPAI A(H5N1) infection and prevention of exposure to these viruses: [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Animals: Interim Recommendations for Prevention, Monitoring, and Public Health Investigations](#).

### Related Links

### CDC Resources

#### Guidance

- [Recommendations for Worker Protection and Use of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) to Reduce Exposure to Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease in Humans](#)
- [Infographic: Protect yourself from getting sick when working with cattle](#) 
- [Considerations for Veterinarians: Evaluating and Handling of Cats Potentially Exposed to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus](#)
- [Health Alert Network \(HAN\) – 00506 | Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus: Identification of Human Infection and Recommendations for Investigations and Response](#)









#### News

- [Human Infection with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Texas](#)
- [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A \(H5N1\) Virus Infection Reported in a Person in the U.S.](#)
- [CDC Reports First U.S. Human Infection in 2024 with Variant Influenza Virus](#)
- [Technical Update: Summary Analysis of Genetic Sequences of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Viruses in Texas](#)

#### Related webpages

- [H5N1 Bird Flu: Current Situation Summary](#)
- [Bird Flu Virus Infections in Humans](#)
- [Avian Influenza in Birds](#)
- [Bird Flu in Pets and Other Animals](#)

## USDA Resources

- [USDA Confirms Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Dairy Herd in New Mexico](#) 
- [USDA, FDA and CDC Share Update on HPAI Detections in Dairy Cattle](#) 
- [Federal and State Veterinary, Public Health Agencies Share Update on HPAI Detection in Kansas, Texas Dairy Herds](#) 
- [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock](#) 
- [Influenza: Not Just for the Birds \(usda.gov\)](#)  [286 KB, 1 page] 
- [APHIS Recommendations for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) H5N1 Virus in Livestock](#)  [292 KB, 6 pages] 

## FDA Resources

- [Questions and Answers Regarding Milk Safety During Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Outbreaks](#) 
- [Questions and Answers Regarding the Safety of Eggs During Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Outbreaks](#) 

## Other Documented Mammalian Infections

In recent years, HPAI H5N1 infections have been detected in mammals including but not limited to wild or feral animals such as foxes, bears, and seals; stray or domestic animals such as cats and dogs; farm animals, such as goats, cows, and mink, and zoo animals such as tigers and leopards. A timeline, which includes mammalian detections of bird flu, can be found here: [Highlights in the History of Avian Influenza \(Bird Flu\) Timeline – 2020-2024](#)



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Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#)

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