

INFORMATION FOR FARM WORKERS

Exposed to H5N1 Bird Flu in U.S. Dairy Cows or Other Animals

H5N1 bird flu is a virus that has recently been detected for the first time in cows. The virus can infect people who work with infected animals or their byproducts (e.g., raw milk), such as dairy workers. This virus has been found at high levels in the raw milk of dairy cows and also in the lungs, muscle, and udder tissue of cows. This virus is spreading among dairy cows, in multiple U.S. states.

If you work with dairy cows, or other animals that could be infected with H5N1 bird flu, there are actions you can take to reduce your risk of infection.

How H5N1 virus might spread from infected cows or other animals to people

This virus could spread from cows to people in several ways:

- If you touch something contaminated with the virus and touch your eyes, nose, or mouth;
- If a liquid contaminated with live virus splashes into your eyes (like raw cow's milk from an infected cow, for example);
- If you eat, drink, or inhale droplets contaminated with virus; or
- If you handle sick or dead barn cats or other animals infected with the virus.

H5N1 Bird Flu Might Spread from Cows to People in Several Ways



If you touch something contaminated with live virus and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth

If a liquid contaminated with live virus splashes into your eyes (like raw milk from an infected cow, for example)

If you eat, drink, or inhale droplets contaminated with live virus



Wear personal protective equipment (PPE)

You should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when in contact with (or around) dairy cows, raw milk, other animals, or surfaces and other items that might be contaminated with virus.

Wash your hands with soap and water, then put on PPE in this order:

1. **Fluid-resistant coveralls**
2. **Waterproof apron**
3. **NIOSH Approved® Respirator** (e.g., N95® filtering facepiece respirator or elastomeric half-mask respirator)
4. **Properly fitted unvented or indirectly-vented safety goggles or face shield**
5. **Head cover or hair cover**
6. **Gloves**
7. **Boots**



More information on worker safety and putting on and removing PPE is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/h5/worker-protection-ppe.htm>.

When working with cows that might be infected, monitor your health and continue to monitor for 10 days after your last exposure.

Symptoms can include:

- Fever (Temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath
- Eye tearing, redness, or irritation
- Headaches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

Observe your health daily, even if you followed all instructions for PPE.

- Call your state/local health department immediately if you develop any illness signs or symptoms while working with infected/potentially infected animals or their byproducts **and for 10 days** after your last exposure to an infected/potentially infected animal or their byproducts. Your health department will help you determine what to do next.
- If you start having symptoms, your local health department may ask you to stay home and stay away from others as much as possible until you can be tested for bird flu.
- To test for bird flu, a doctor or nurse will collect samples from you. This is usually done by swabbing your nose and throat. If your eyes are red or look infected, a doctor or nurse may also swab your eyes.
- If you start having symptoms, a doctor may prescribe you medication that is used for treatment of flu (antiviral medication). It is important to follow the directions for taking the medication.