

H5 Bird Flu Virus FAQ

1. What is H5 Bird Flu, and how does it affect humans?

H5 Bird Flu is a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus primarily found in wild birds, poultry, and some mammals. Humans can contract the virus through direct exposure to infected animals or contaminated surfaces. As of now, there is no documented human-to-human transmission.

2. How many human cases have been reported in the U.S.?

There have been 67 documented human cases of H5 Bird Flu in the U.S.:

- California: 38 cases (mostly dairy farm workers)
- Colorado: 10 cases (primarily poultry farm workers)
- Washington: 11 cases (primarily poultry farm workers)

3. What are the risks to dairy and poultry workers?

Workers in dairy and poultry farms are at higher risk due to close contact with infected animals or contaminated materials like raw milk, animal droppings, or barn environments. The virus can spread through splashes, droplets, or touching contaminated surfaces.

4. What personal protective equipment (PPE) should workers wear?

Workers should wear PPE to reduce the risk of infection.

Recommended PPE includes:

- Head or hair cover
- Safety goggles or a face shield
- NIOSH-approved particulate respirators (e.g., N95[®] masks)
- Coveralls (optional waterproof apron over coveralls)
- Disposable gloves (optional outer work gloves)
- Boot covers or boots
- Workers should ask their supervisor for guidance on proper PPE use



5. How can farms improve biosecurity to protect workers and animals?

Farms can implement the following biosecurity best practices:

- Restrict access: Limit visitors and use one designated entrance and exit.
- Disinfect regularly: Provide shoe covers, disinfect footwear, and clean vehicle tires with a bleach solution (4 oz bleach per gallon of water).
- Avoid sharing equipment: Don't borrow tools or equipment from other farms.
- Prevent mixing species: Keep livestock, pets, and wildlife separate, and ensure bird areas are secure from wild animals.
- Monitor animal health: Check for symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, discharge, lack of appetite, or sudden deaths.

6. How can the virus spread from animals to humans?

H5 Bird Flu can spread through:

- Touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your face. Splashing of contaminated liquids (e.g., raw milk) into eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Inhaling contaminated droplets or dust.
- Handling infected or dead animals (e.g., barn cats).

7. What symptoms should workers watch for in animals?

Key symptoms in animals include:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Discharge from eyes or nose
- Trouble breathing
- Lack of appetite
- Difficulty moving or standing upright
- Sudden, unexplained deaths



8. What should workers do if they notice sick animals?

If animals exhibit signs of illness, workers should:

- Isolate the sick animals immediately.
- Report the illness to a veterinarian or State/Federal animal health officials.
- Follow the veterinarian's guidance for testing and treatment.

9. Is it safe to drink milk from dairy farms?

Milk from dairy farms is safe if it is appropriately pasteurized. Avoid consuming raw milk, as it can contain live viruses from infected cows.

10. Where can workers find additional resources?

For more detailed information, visit the CDC's Bird Flu Situation Summary at: <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html>

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Contact the Loss Control team at losscontrol@bhhc.com for any further questions.

