Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) Outbreak in Cattle

Since March 2024, the USDA has confirmed that cows on dairy farms in at least 12 states have tested positive for H5N1 bird flu. H5N1 bird flu virus has been found in raw (unpasteurized) milk and secretions from the nose of cows on these farms.

Symptoms in Cattle:

- decreased milk production;
- acute sudden drop in production with some severely impacted cows experiencing thicker, concentrated milk;
- decrease in feed consumption; abnormal feces; and low-grade fever.

The NY State Department of Agriculture and Markets is requiring all Cattle to be tested for H5N1 prior to crossing State lines and prior to Fair or Exhibition entries.

Can people get sick from this strain of bird flu?

The risk to the general public from this strain of bird flu is low. Rarely, bird flu can be passed to humans who have had direct contact with infected birds and mammals, including cattle. One human case has been confirmed in the United States this year.

Has H5N1 bird flu been detected in New York?

To date, there have been no human cases of H5N1 bird flu and no detections in cattle in New York. Since 2022, H5N1 bird flu has been found in domestic poultry, wild birds, and a few species of mammals in New York.

Is it safe to drink milk?

Yes, drinking milk from the commercial milk supply is safe because it is pasteurized. Pasteurization kills the bird flu virus. Raw (unpasteurized) milk is never safe to drink, and NYSDOH strongly recommends that people do not drink raw milk or eat products made from raw milk.

How can farm workers protect themselves?

Individuals who work with poultry or dairy cattle may be at increased risk of H5N1 bird flu virus infection. To reduce this risk, anyone who works directly with birds or cattle should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) around animals that might be or are known to be ill with bird flu. More information about PPE guidance from the CDC for farmworkers can be found here.

If you suspect your cattle are showing signs of HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Flu, H5N1), contact your veterinarian. Additionally, report cattle and birds with symptoms to your Local Health Department.

Should you have any questions, please call the Allegany County Department of Health at 585-268-9250.

NYSDOH: https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/avian/status.htm

CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/prevention/worker-protection-ppe.html

NYS Dept. Of Agriculture and Markets: https://agriculture.ny.gov/news/state-department-agriculture-announces-temporary-import-requirements-dairy-cattle-coming-new

https://agriculture.ny.gov/news/state-department-agriculture-announces-testing-requirements-lactating-dairy-cattle-entering