

Animal Health Alert:
H5 Bird Flu detected in LA County wild bird.
Recall of raw milk product that tested positive for virus.
11.25.2024

Key Points:

- H5 bird flu has been detected in a Canada goose in Los Angeles County. Additionally, a western gull has tested positive for influenza A virus, and tests are pending to determine if it is H5 bird flu.
- Animal health workers in Los Angeles County should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when having contact with birds and any neurologic mammals that may have been exposed to H5 bird flu. Safety guidance for animal control/shelter/veterinary staff and the public is available.
- One lot of a raw whole milk product produced by Raw Farm, LLC in California has been recalled due to a positive test for H5 bird flu.
- Pets, especially cats, have been shown to become severely ill and die after consuming raw milk infected with H5 bird flu virus. Veterinarians should share information about the raw milk recall and remind pet owners not to offer raw dairy products to pets.

Dear Veterinary Colleagues:

Note – the term “H5 bird flu” is now being used to refer to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 in order to simplify terminology.

H5 bird flu confirmed in Canada goose found in Westlake Village

- A Canada goose with neurologic signs (generalized weakness, unable to hold its head up) found on 11/11/2024 in Westlake Village was confirmed to be infected with H5 bird flu by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL).
- A western gull with neurologic and respiratory signs (tremors, head tilt, drooling, sneezing) found on 11/4/2024 in Manhattan Beach has tested positive for influenza A, and tests are pending at NVSL to determine if the virus is H5 bird flu.

Prior to the positive Canada goose on 11/11/2024, the last detection of H5 bird flu in an animal in Los Angeles County was in a western gull found in Manhattan Beach in January 2024. There has been a total of 35 H5 bird flu infected wild birds detected in Los Angeles County since September 2022. To date, no mammals in Los Angeles County have tested positive for the virus. While primarily affecting poultry, H5 bird flu infections in cattle and other mammals highlight the potential for the virus to mutate and become more transmissible among mammals, including humans.

Currently, there is no evidence of local human-to-human spread of H5 bird flu, and the risk to the general public continues to be low. However, people who come into close contact with

animals, especially wild birds and their feces, or with infected dairy cattle, have a higher level of risk of exposure. Veterinary Public Health (VPH) has H5 bird flu infection prevention guidance for veterinary and animal care staff, as well as for the general public in the H5 bird flu section on our website (linked below).

Additional Update: H5 bird flu virus detected in one lot of raw milk in California.

CDPH Warns Against Drinking Single Lot of Raw Milk Following Bird Flu Detection; Secures Voluntary Recall. 11/24/2024 - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR24-039.aspx>

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has warned consumers not to drink one batch of cream top, whole raw milk from Raw Farm, LLC of Fresno County due to a detection of H5 bird flu virus. Raw Farm, LLC has issued a voluntary recall at the state's request of the affected lot code 20241109 with a Best By Date of 11/27/2024. Consumers should immediately return any remaining product to the store where it was purchased.

Consumption of H5 bird flu-infected raw milk has been shown to cause severe illness and death in mammals, especially cats. There have been numerous reports of deaths in barn cats living at dairy farms with H5 bird flu outbreaks. Raw dairy products marketed for pets, including frozen raw dairy products, may be sold across state lines, and are regulated differently than raw dairy products for humans. It is strongly recommended not to feed any raw dairy products to pets. The CDC recommends against consuming raw milk contaminated with live H5 bird flu virus as a way to attempt to develop antibodies against the H5 bird flu virus to protect against future disease.

Pasteurization kills and inactivates the H5 bird flu virus, therefore pasteurized milk and dairy products remain safe to consume. However, freezing raw milk does not kill the virus and frozen raw dairy products should be considered to carry the same level of risk for exposure as refrigerated raw dairy products.

Reporting potential H5 bird flu infections in animals

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health requests your continued assistance in monitoring for potential H5 bird flu cases in birds and mammals presenting with neurologic signs or with exposure to dairy cattle or raw milk products. Please use our HPAI-specific reporting form when notifying VPH of any suspected cases: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/docs/Forms/HPAI.pdf>.

Veterinarians and animal health workers are encouraged to contact us with any questions by email: vet@ph.lacounty.gov, or by phone: 213-288-7060 (Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm). Please visit our VPH webpage for more information about H5 bird flu (link provided below).

Resources:

- H5 Bird Flu in Los Angeles County. <http://ph.lacounty.gov/vet/HPAI.htm>
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Avian Influenza (H5 Bird Flu) – Situation Summary - <https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/php/avian-flu-summary/>
- California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) - Avian Influenza Updates https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Avian_Influenza.html
- USDA - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Detections in Livestock <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>
- USDA – Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Detections in Mammals <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/mammals>

Sincerely,

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Please do not reply, this email box is not monitored. Email vet@ph.lacounty.gov if you need AHAN-related assistance. To sign up for future Animal Health Alerts or to view previously released AHANs, please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/vet/AHAN.htm>.