



Press Release

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H5N1 Outbreak on Dairy Farms Across the United States

Recently, there have been several outbreaks of H5N1 virus reported on dairy farms across the United States. Knowing that this may be a cause of concern for our local agricultural community, the Baker County Health Department wanted to share some key information about protecting your health.

At this time, the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) considers the human health risk to the U.S. public to be low. People who are not wearing personal protective equipment and have close contact or contact over a long time with infected animals, or who spend time in locations contaminated by infected animals, are at greater risk of infection.

What are the signs that an animal is sick with the H5N1 virus?

According to the USDA, signs that cattle may be sick with this disease include decreased milk production; reduced appetite; thickened, discolored milk; lethargy; fever; and/or dehydration. Producers should monitor herds closely for cattle with signs of the disease.

This information comes from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), the two lead agencies responding to these outbreaks. This is an evolving health situation and information could change. Please visit the websites below for the most recent updates on this situation.

How can people who work with cattle protect their health?

People working with or around cattle (including people working with milk waste) that appear to be sick or are known to be sick with the H5N1 virus, should wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when in direct or close contact (within about 6 feet) with sick or dead animals, animal feces, litter, milk, or materials known to be or potentially contaminated with the virus.

The recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) includes disposable gloves, boots or boot covers, a NIOSH Approved® particulate respirator (e.g., N95® respirator), disposable fluid-resistant coveralls, and disposable head cover or hair cover. If there is a risk of liquid splash onto the face, properly fitted safety goggles (unvented or indirectly vented) or a face shield is recommended. Wash hands thoroughly before putting on and taking off PPE.

People working with or around cattle, even if not in close contact, should not touch their eyes, nose or mouth in potentially contaminated areas. This means people should not be eating,



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drinking, smoking, chewing gum, etc. in these areas. Wash hands thoroughly and regularly, especially before eating, smoking, touching your face, taking breaks, going to the bathroom and leaving work.

People exposed to virus-infected cattle (including people wearing recommended PPE) should be monitored for signs and symptoms of acute respiratory illness beginning after their first exposure and for 10 days after their last exposure. Signs and symptoms in people can include: mild illness: cough, sore throat, eye redness or eye discharge such as conjunctivitis, fever or feeling feverish, runny nose, fatigue, muscle pain, joint pain, headache; moderate to severe illness: shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, altered mental status, seizures; and complications: pneumonia, respiratory failure, acute respiratory distress syndrome, multi-organ failure, sepsis, inflammation of the brain.

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/index.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/hpai/hpai-interim-recommendations.html>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/vs-recommendations-hpai-livestock.pdf>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/hpai-dairy-faqs.pdf>