

December 12, 2024

Dear Nevada County Providers,

We want to call your attention to a California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) Health Update which was released by the California Department of Public Health on December 6<sup>th</sup> changing guidance for testing for avian influenza A (H5N1). Previously, it was only recommended that H5 subtyping of influenza A be ordered if an individual has a history of exposure to affected animals such as dairy cows or wild birds. The updated guidance also advises testing individuals for influenza A with subtyping for H5 if they have flu symptoms and recent exposure to raw milk or raw dairy products such as drinking raw milk.

### **Background on avian influenza H5N1 to date.**

As background, the situation with avian influenza A (H5N1) is dynamic and changing rapidly in California. Over 500 California dairies have been affected by H5N1 including one raw milk dairy. Pasteurization inactivates the virus, and pasteurized milk is safe to drink but may still contain non-infectious H5N1 fragments. Raw milk can contain live virus and has the potential to transmit disease. There are no known cases of H5N1 due to drinking raw milk at this time. There are over 30 cases of H5N1 in dairy workers (primarily conjunctivitis) from handling raw milk and sick cows.

While there are no documented cases of H5N1 in Nevada County, there have been detections of H5N1 in wastewater in Nevada County and throughout the state. Recently, in another county, there was one case of H5N1 in a child with mild respiratory symptoms in addition to the over 30 cases in dairy workers in California. The cause of the child infected with H5N1 is of unknown origin. Fortunately, all cases in California have been very mild disease.

### **Testing instructions.**

If you suspect H5N1 notify Nevada County Public Health at 530-265-1450. Testing for influenza A with reflex to H5 subtyping can be ordered through Quest laboratory. Instructions for testing through Quest are linked below. If you are unable to order through Quest, an alternative is to contact Nevada County Public Health for assistance with ordering testing through a public health lab as prior approval is needed. There are complete instructions for testing in the document Human Avian Influenza A (H5N1) Nevada County Testing Guidance for Providers that is linked below.

### **Synopsis of the CDPH H5N1 Health Update.**

There is a link to the complete document below. These are the most pertinent points from the CDPH Health Update:

- Healthcare providers should consider avian influenza A in persons with acute respiratory symptoms and/or conjunctivitis and recent exposure to animals suspected or confirmed to have avian influenza A OR recent consumption of raw dairy products. Of note, all cases among California dairy workers have had conjunctivitis.
- Providers should immediately report any suspected human avian influenza A infections to their [local health departments](#).
- Testing of respiratory and conjunctival specimens for avian influenza A is available at some public health laboratories and two commercial laboratories.

- Antiviral treatment is recommended for patients suspected or confirmed to have avian influenza A infection and antiviral prophylaxis is recommended for their close (e.g., household) contacts.
- Healthcare providers should follow [standard, contact, and airborne precautions](#) when caring for patients suspected of having avian influenza A infection.
- All human avian influenza A cases in the U.S. have been mild. One case of severe disease has been reported in Canada.



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CDPH Avian Influenza A Testing Health Update (12/6/2024):

[Evaluation and Testing for Human Avian Influenza A H5N1 Infection](#)

[CDPH Avian Influenza A \(H5N1\) Information for Health Professionals](#)

[CDPH Avian Influenza A Infection Control for Healthcare Providers \(PDF\)](#)

[Human Avian Influenza \(H5N1\) Nevada County Testing Guidance for Healthcare Providers \(PDF\)](#)