



Information for New Jersey Farm Owners on H5N1 Bird Flu

The New Jersey Departments of Health and Agriculture are closely monitoring the emerging situation with H5N1 bird flu and would like to provide important information to New Jersey farm owners. H5N1 bird flu is a virus that has been circulating in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and more recently in dairy cows in the United States. H5N1 bird flu currently has not been detected in dairy cattle or in people in New Jersey, but due to the ongoing outbreaks in other states, New Jersey farm owners and farm workers should be aware of the risks and monitor dairy cattle, domestic poultry, other livestock, farm pets, and farm workers for signs of illness. The public health risk of H5N1 bird flu is low, but people can sometimes get bird flu, usually after close, unprotected contact with infected animals. Poultry and livestock farmers and workers, veterinarians and veterinary staff, and slaughterhouse workers performing certain tasks on lactating dairy cattle are at increased risk of exposure to animals infected with bird flu viruses.

Monitoring and reporting sick dairy cattle or domestic poultry

Clinical signs of H5N1 bird flu in poultry may include:

- Sudden increase in bird death
- Sneezing, gasping for air, coughing and nasal discharge (runny nose)
- Watery and/or green diarrhea
- Lack of energy and poor appetite
- Drop in egg production or soft- or thin-shelled misshapen eggs
- Swelling around the eyes, neck and head
- Purple discoloration of the wattles, combs and legs

Clinical signs of H5N1 bird flu in dairy cattle may include:

- Decreased appetite
- Drop in milk production
- Thickened milk
- Abnormal feces
- Fever

Where to report sick birds and sick dairy cattle having clinical signs consistent with H5N1, or unexplained deaths

All poultry and cattle owners need to report sick or unexplained bird or dairy cattle deaths to State/Federal officials immediately.

For more information or to report sick poultry or cattle contact:

New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health 609-671-6400 **-OR-**
USDA APHIS Veterinary Services NJ Area Office 609-259-5260 or toll-free at 1-866-536-7593

To report sick or dead wild birds contact:

USDA Wildlife Services 908-735-5654 **-OR-** NJDEP Fish & Wildlife 609-292-2965

On farm biosecurity strategies

Farms containing multiple species, particularly cattle, and/or poultry, should uphold biosecurity practices that reduce the risk of disease spreading between animals. Farm staff and visitors should adhere to recommended precautions regarding contact with other animals and follow personal protective equipment (PPE) protocols. Cattle and poultry farms should identify areas of potential improvement in biosecurity, including limiting farm access to essential employees only, cleaning and disinfection of vehicles, implementing strategies for wild bird determent, and use of footbaths at barn entryways. Online resources, such as [Secure Milk Supply- Biosecurity](https://securemilksupply.org/milk-producers/biosecurity/), [CFSPH - Biosecurity](https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity/), and USDA Defend the Flock <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/defend-the-flock> can be utilized to tailor a farm-specific biosecurity plan.

Notify your local health department of human exposures

Contact your local health department if you think anyone on your farm may have been exposed to bird flu. Your local health department will provide information on symptom monitoring and will coordinate testing with healthcare providers. Local health department contact information can be found at www.localhealth.nj.gov.

Recommendations for farm owners and workers

Refer to the attached Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's flyer "Protect Yourself from H5N1 When Working With Farm Animals" for information and recommendations to share with workers for preventing against H5N1 infection. NJDOH can assist farm owners with preparedness by providing initial supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) for farmers and workers who work with or around dairy cattle or poultry. NJDOH, in accordance with guidance from the CDC, recommends that farm workers wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when working closely with sick or dead animals, animal feces, litter, raw milk and other materials that might have the H5N1 virus. Farms should have PPE available for use if animals are suspected or confirmed to have bird flu.

PPE will be made available by the New Jersey Department of Health through Rutgers Cooperative Extension county offices. PPE from NJDOH includes the following as supply remains available:

- Bouffant caps
- Coveralls
- Face shields and refills
- Goggles
- Gloves
- N95 respirators
- Gowns
- Shoe covers

How to request PPE

If you would like to request PPE supplies and/or require additional information, please contact your respective county extension office. You will be asked to specify the quantity and type of PPE needed for your operation. County extension office contact information can be found at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/county/>

PPE considerations

- Be aware that wearing PPE and certain clothing can increase risk for heat-related illness. Additional information can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heat_burden.html
- Fogging of goggles and face masks may affect vision.
- Respirators are designed primarily to be used in workplaces by adults who are part of an employer's respiratory protection program. The risks and benefits of using respirators without proper training and fit testing are uncertain. For a respirator to be most effective, it must form a seal to the face to keep particles from leaking around the edges. When not fit tested, a tight seal should be achieved following manufacturer's instructions.

Additional Resources

- https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/novel_flu.shtml
- https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/avian_influenza.html