

October 5, 2024

NEWS RELEASE

Possible Human Case of Bird Flu Being Investigated in Kern County

Kern County Public Health, in coordination with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is investigating a potential human case of H5N1 bird flu in an individual who had contact with infected cattle at a dairy farm.

“While the risk to the general public remains low, it continues to be extremely important for persons who may come in contact with infected animals to use caution and wear proper personal protective equipment,” stated Brynn Carrigan, Director of Kern County Public Health.

The virus was first detected in dairy cattle in California in August, and public health officials have been monitoring workers at affected dairies. The risk to the general public remains low, but people who interact with infected animals, like dairy or poultry farm workers, are at higher risk of getting bird flu. CDPH recommends that personal protective equipment (PPE), such as respirators (N95 masks), eye protection (face shields or safety goggles), and gloves be worn by anyone working with animals or materials that are infected or potentially infected with bird flu. Full PPE guidance can be found on [CDPH’s Worker Protection from Bird Flu](#) page.

People exposed to infected animals should monitor for symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure. Symptoms of bird flu include eye redness (conjunctivitis), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, trouble breathing, and fever. If symptoms develop, immediately isolate from others and contact your healthcare provider to get timely testing and treatment.

Pasteurized milk and dairy products continue to be safe to consume, as pasteurization is fully effective at inactivating the bird flu virus. As an added precaution, and according to longstanding state and federal requirements, milk from sick cows is not permitted in the public milk supply.

The protection of the health of Kern County residents and visitors is the top priority of Kern County Public Health. Kern County Public Health also takes the privacy of our residents’ protected health information very seriously. At this time, no further details, including the location of the dairy farm where the case may have been exposed, will be released.

For the latest information on the national bird flu response, see the [CDC’s Bird Flu Response Update](#).

To report an unusual number of sick livestock or you suspect bird flu in your livestock, call the California Department of Food and Agriculture at 1-866-922-2473.

Media Contact: Michelle Corson, phpio@kerncounty.com.

Grounded in Health

1800 Mt. Vernon Ave., Bakersfield, CA. 93306 | 661.321.3000 | www.kernpublichealth.com