

FAQ for BIRD FLU

CSUS, As of 12/19/2024

What is Bird Flu?

Bird flu, also known as avian influenza A (H5N1) or highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), is caused by a virus that can cause serious illness and death in birds and mammals. Human infections with bird flu viruses are rare, but they can happen when the virus gets into a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or when inhaled. It is a different type of virus than COVID, which is a Corona Virus, but the outcome is a similar respiratory infection. The concern is it could mutate and become transmissible between humans.

Who is at Risk?

You are at higher risk if you work with or are around poultry, dairy cows, alpacas, wildlife or raw (unpasteurized) milk. This includes any contact with animal fluids, feces, or feathers. This also includes drinking raw milk.

Why should CSUS Students and Employees be concerned?

CSUS students and employees who maintain chickens and other animals at their homes should consider taking safety precautions. Students and Employees who maintain outdoor cats that can contact wild birds are also at risk if the cat becomes infected. Those who drink raw milk also increase their risk. The risk to those who don't come in contact with animals or drink raw milk is minimal right now.

What are the safety precautions?

If you must have contact with chickens or other outdoor animals, it is recommended that you wear personal protective equipment (PPE) and take extra precautions.

This includes:

- Wearing PPE
- Goggles or face shield
- NIOSH® approved respirator such as N95 mask
- Gloves

- Coveralls
- Head cover
- Boots
- Working outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor environments.
- Washing your hands after contact with animals or their environments and before taking breaks or eating/drinking.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wearing dedicated work clothing and footwear and washing them to keep on-site if possible.
- Changing clothes and footwear and showering after working with chickens or other animals.

What steps can I take to avoid bird flu right now?

1. Avoid contact with infected animals. Avoid direct contact with birds and other animals that could be infected with bird flu. Wild birds can be infected with bird flu even if they don't look sick. Be cautious with an outdoor cat.
2. Get the seasonal flu vaccine. CDPH recommends that all Californians, especially workers at risk for exposure to bird flu, receive a seasonal flu vaccine. While the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against bird flu, getting vaccinated can lower the risk of being infected with both seasonal flu and bird flu at the same time. Getting vaccinated also reduces the chance of severe illness from seasonal flu.
3. DO NOT DRINK RAW MILK. Only consume pasteurized dairy products. The bird flu virus can be present in raw, unpasteurized milk. Unpasteurized milk may contain other germs that can make you sick. Do not touch or consume raw milk or raw milk products. Pasteurized milk and dairy foods are safe to eat.

Why should I be concerned about my cat?

Bird flu is known to be transmitted to cats, especially if they are outdoor cats that can easily interact with infected wild birds.