

Health Information for People in Contact with Avian Influenza H5N1 Test-Positive Flocks

UPDATED OCTOBER 2023

Human Health Risk

- This H5N1 virus does not pose a risk to the general public, nor is it a food safety risk, but there is a potential risk for those who work directly with infected flocks.
- The risk to poultry workers is low, but in other parts of the world, people in direct contact with ill poultry have gotten sick from similar highly pathogenic H5 viruses.
- While the risk is low, we want you to be aware of the possibility and provide instructions on how to protect yourself.

Prevention Measures and Personal Protective Equipment

- Normally, biosecurity means keeping germs out. Now that a flock has tested positive, we want to keep the germs in, and keep you and your family healthy.
- Limit contact with the infected flock(s).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth while working.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with every flock on the farm, regardless of test status.
- PPE should include:
 - Washable or disposable long sleeved coveralls or Tyvek suit
 - Rubber boots that can be disinfected or disposable plastic boots (replace if torn)
 - Washable or disposable head covering or Tyvek suit hood
 - Latex or nitrile gloves, but you may use cotton gloves underneath (replace if torn)
 - Goggles
 - N95 Respirator- fit tested is best
 - If an N95 is not available, use a KN94
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, use the bathroom, or leave the animal area while wearing PPE.
- Leave all contaminated clothing and equipment at work.
- Disinfect any personal items (cell phones) that were brought into the animal area.
- When you get home, place your dirty clothes in the washer and take a shower.

Removing Personal Protective Equipment

- PPE should be donned (put on) and doffed (taken off) in a separate dirty to clean transition area. If using rubber boots, clean and disinfect the boots in the dirty area.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used to perform hand hygiene while removing PPE. Hands should be washed with soap and water once all PPE is removed and necessary items are disinfected.

- PPE should be removed in the following order:
 1. Remove soiled gloves and put on new ones or perform hand hygiene
 2. Remove goggles and respirator, and unzip coveralls. Dispose of respirator
 3. Perform hand hygiene
 4. Start removing coveralls by taking off hood and pulling arms out, rolling it down from the inside out
 5. Fully remove and dispose of the coverall and disposable boots stepping onto the clean side once you have removed the coverall/boot from each leg
 6. Remove and dispose of gloves (if still wearing them)
 7. Perform hand hygiene
 8. Clean and disinfect reusable goggles and any personal items that were brought into the area
 9. Wash hands with soap and water

Public Health Monitoring of Workers

- The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will contact you to do a short interview about your work and to answer any questions you may have.
- If you entered a barn on a test-positive premise we would like to contact you twice on days 5 and 10 from your last exposure to the flock to ask about any respiratory illness or eye infection.
- You will receive an email with a link to a two-question survey on your monitoring days (If you would prefer to be contacted by phone/text, that will also be an option).
- Having respiratory symptoms does not mean you are sick with avian influenza H5N1, as these symptoms are common in a variety of illnesses.
- If you develop symptoms and you agree to it, MDH will help arrange for you to be tested.

Resources

- For more information on risks to people from avian influenza, please visit [Technical Report: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Viruses \(cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/spotlights/2022-2023/h5n1-technical-report_september.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/spotlights/2022-2023/h5n1-technical-report_september.htm)
- The Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline is free, confidential, and available 24/7 at 833-600-2670, or at [Coping with Farm & Rural Stress \(mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress\)](https://mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress)
- [Minnesota Farm Advocates \(mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates\)](https://mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates) provide one-on-one assistance for farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems.

If you have questions or develop respiratory symptoms after working with ill poultry, call 651-201-5414 and ask for the Zoonotic Diseases Unit.