

Fact Sheet – Influenza A (H5N1) Virus & Swine Implications

Background

The Virus

Widely known in the U.S. and beyond, influenza A (H5N1) is a contagious virus that results in a disease of domestic and wild birds that is sometimes referred to as “highly pathogenic avian influenza.” The disease is a major threat to the poultry industry, animal health, trade and the economy worldwide. Caused by influenza type A viruses, the disease varies in severity depending on the strain and avian species affected. Influenza A (H5N1) virus strains typically cause high mortality in domestic poultry flocks.

Dairy Cattle Cases

On March 25, 2024, the USDA’s Animal Plant Health and Inspection Service (APHIS), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), along with state animal health and public health officials, investigated and confirmed suspected influenza A (H5N1) virus cases in several dairy cattle herds in Texas and Kansas. [Subsequent cases have been confirmed in several other states.](#)

No Swine Cases To-Date

Although influenza A (H5N1) virus has not been confirmed in U.S. swine herds at this time, APHIS advises that all livestock producers implement heightened [biosecurity measures](#) to help reduce the potential spread of this influenza strain. Additionally, the agency advises farmers to avoid housing multiple species of animals together at any time. Special emphasis is placed on keeping all livestock away from birds of any kind and wild animals, which puts outdoor-raised livestock at increased risk of exposure to this virus. As always, livestock producers should report any suspicious illnesses to their herd veterinarian for immediate action.

Human Cases

Although rare, on April 1, CDC [reported](#) that a person in Texas had tested positive for influenza A (H5N1) virus. The CDC said this infection does not change its human health risk assessment for the public, which it considers to be low. However, people with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals (including livestock), or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals, are at greater risk of infection. CDC [has interim recommendations](#) for prevention, monitoring and public health investigations of influenza A (H5N1) viruses.



Fact Sheet – Influenza A (H5N1) Virus & Swine Implications

Key Talking Points

- There are currently no suspected, nor confirmed, cases of influenza A (H5N1) virus in pigs in the U.S.
- According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), you cannot get the flu from eating or handling properly cooked pork. [Properly cooked pork](#) and pork products are safe.
- While pigs are susceptible to influenza A viruses, swine health experts do not know if H5N1 virus poses a higher risk of disease, illness or mortality in pigs than other influenza strains in circulation.
- Influenza A viruses are constantly changing in both the animal and human population. Variant influenza A viruses that contain components of human, avian and swine adapted viruses are not unusual. Movement of these viruses between humans and animals is [closely monitored by the CDC and other public health entities](#).
- According to the FDA and CDC, there is currently no concern about the safety of commercially pasteurized dairy products, and the [public health risk associated with influenza A \(H5N1\) virus remains low](#). Dairies are required to send only milk from healthy animals into processing for human consumption.
- Pork producers [deeply care for their animals](#) and always strive to do what's right for them, their employees and U.S. consumers. That's why they have a close working relationship with their veterinarians to ensure the best possible outcome for animal well-being and human safety every day.

Additional Resources

- [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock](#) – APHIS information about detections in livestock, biosecurity and other resources. *APHIS posts confirmed detections of HPAI in livestock by 4:00 p.m. ET each day.*
- [CDC Interim HPAI Guidelines](#) – Covers the virus in animals with recommendations for prevention, monitoring and more.
- [FAQs on HPAI in Dairy Herds](#) – A new resource from APHIS that covers HPAI in dairy and answers common questions.
- [Secure Pork Supply Biosecurity Checklists](#) – A collection of best practices for indoor- and outdoor-raised pigs to provide additional protection from disease threats and transmission.
- [CDC H5N1 Current Situation Summary](#) – The latest information about influenza A (H5N1) with details about different subtypes of influenza A in mammals.

The National Pork Board recognizes the Ohio Pork Council for its partnership and original authorship of this important resource.

Last revised: 4/11/24

