

---

## *National IHS Public Health Council*

---

### National IHS Public Health Council Advisory – Avian Flu (Bird Flu H5N1)

I am writing to update you on avian “bird flu” influenza (H5N1). My goal is to ensure that you have the most current information and to assure you that IHS remains situationally aware in partnership with other public health agencies. **The CDC reports that the immediate risk to the general public from H5 bird flu remains low.**

As you know, 14 cases of avian influenza A (H5) virus infection have been reported in the United States since April 2024. Most of these cases have been traced to exposure to sick dairy cattle or virus-infected poultry.

In collaboration with our federal partners, IHS has taken a proactive approach to this outbreak using a [One Health approach](#).

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Difficulty Breathing
- Runny or Stiffy Nose
- Muscle Aches
- Diarrhea/vomiting
- Eye Tearing, Redness or Irritation (Conjunctivitis)

The source of the exposure in the most recent case reported in Missouri on September 6<sup>th</sup> has not been determined, and, again, the CDC reports that the immediate risk to the general public from H5 bird flu remains low.

According to our partners at the CDC, Missouri continues to lead the investigation into the H5 case reported last week with technical assistance from the CDC in Atlanta. The case was in a person who was hospitalized as a result of significant underlying medical conditions. They presented with chest pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and weakness. The person was not severely ill, nor were they in the intensive care unit. They were treated with influenza antiviral medications, subsequently discharged, and have since recovered. One household contact of the patient became ill with similar symptoms on the same day as the case, was not tested, and has since recovered. The simultaneous development of symptoms does not support person-to-person spread but suggests a common exposure. Also shared by Missouri; subsequently, a second close contact of the case – a health care worker – developed mild symptoms and tested negative for

flu. A 10-day follow-up period has since passed, and no additional cases have been found. There is no epidemiologic evidence to support person-to-person transmission of H5 at this time.

Our partners at the CDC continue to support states that are monitoring people exposed to cows, birds, or other domestic or wild animals infected or potentially infected with avian influenza A(H5N1) viruses. More monitoring information can be found at [Symptom Monitoring Among Persons Exposed to HPAI](#).

Preventive Recommendations:

- Conduct Active Flu monitoring and surveillance at your home and workplace
- Self-monitor exposure and consider wearing PPE, if applicable
- Vaccinate against the Flu, COVID-19, and all other vaccine-preventable diseases
- Stay home when feeling sick

IHS has taken a proactive position on this public health issue, and I will be sure to give you more updates as indicated.

Thank you for everything that you do each day!

*dr C*

L. Christensen MD MBA MSJ FACS  
Chief Medical Officer  
Indian Health Service