



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: February 14, 2025

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: Subtyping of Influenza A in Hospitalized Patients

Key Messages

Healthcare providers and clinical laboratories should:

- Expedite the subtyping of influenza A-positive specimens from hospitalized patients, particularly those in an intensive care unit (ICU).
- Consider avian influenza A(H5N1) in persons with acute respiratory symptoms and/or conjunctivitis and recent exposure to animals or humans suspected or confirmed to have influenza A(H5N1) infection or consumption of raw milk in the last 10 days.
- Immediately report cases of known or suspected avian influenza (H5N1) to the County Epidemiology Unit by calling 619-692-8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM).

Situation

There is updated guidance for subtyping influenza A-positive specimens based on a [Health Alert](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a [CAHAN](#) from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

Background

In the United States, an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) viruses is currently affecting wild birds and there have been subsequent outbreaks with these viruses among poultry flocks, dairy cow herds, as well as infections among other animals including domestic cats. To date in California, there have been over [700 infected dairy cow herds](#) and [38 confirmed human cases](#), all but two of whom were dairy workers working with infected herds.

No known human-to-human transmission of avian influenza A(H5N1) has been detected in the U.S. and the risk to the general population remains low. However, because of the possibility that this virus could gain the ability to spread between people or evolve to cause more severe disease, ongoing monitoring for human infection is important.

Actions Requested

1. **Expedite** subtyping of influenza A-positive specimens from hospitalized patients, particularly those in an intensive care unit (ICU)
2. **Consider** avian influenza (H5N1) in persons with acute respiratory symptoms and/or conjunctivitis with relevant exposure history as outlined in [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Animals: Interim Recommendations for Prevention, Monitoring, and Public Health Investigations](#).
3. **Treat** suspected or confirmed cases of avian influenza (H5N1) with antivirals as clinically indicated.

4. **Utilize** [appropriate PPE and infection prevention and control measures](#) recommended for seasonal influenza (e.g. adhere to standard and droplet precautions and use caution for aerosol-generating procedures). [For severe cases](#) who are confirmed or suspected of novel influenza A, contact and airborne precautions are recommended.
5. **Report** cases of suspected or confirmed cases of avian influenza (H5N1) to the County Epidemiology Unit by calling 619-692 8499 (Monday-Friday 8 AM-5 PM).
6. **Submit** Influenza A-positive lab specimens for which subtyping is negative to the San Diego Public Health Lab for retesting, following the testing guidelines provided by SDPHL using the [Influenza Test Requisition Form](#). Note: the specimen is “unsubtypable” if neither seasonal influenza subtype (H1 or H3) is detected.

Resources

Federal

[Health Alert Network \(HAN\) - 00520 | Accelerated Subtyping of Influenza A in Hospitalized Patients \(cdc.gov\)](#)
[Interim Guidance on Specimen Collection and Testing for Patients with Suspected Infection with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease or with the Potential to Cause Severe Disease in Humans | Bird Flu | CDC](#)
[Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Livestock | USDA](#)

State

[Subtyping of Influenza A in Hospitalized Patients \(ca.gov\)](#)
[Bird Flu \(ca.gov\)](#)
[Avian influenza Updates | CDFA](#)
[Avian and Novel Influenza Quicksheet | CDPH](#)
[Interim Guidance for Infection Control Within Healthcare Settings When Caring for Confirmed Cases, Probable Cases, and Cases Under Investigation for Infection with Novel Influenza A Viruses Associated with Severe Disease | Bird Flu | CDC](#)

[Infection Prevention and Control Strategies for Seasonal Influenza in Healthcare Settings | Influenza \(Flu\) | CDC](#)

Local

[Avian Influenza \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](#)
[CAHAN San Diego 10-4-2024.pdf \(sandiegocounty.gov\)](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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