



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants
Date: June 23, 2023
From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: Request to Submit Specimens from Patients Receiving Intensive Care for Influenza A to Public Health Laboratories

Key Messages

- Outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza A(H5N1) can spill over into humans.
- Perform influenza testing, including subtyping, for patients with respiratory illness who are at higher risk for contracting novel or variant influenza.
- Please submit influenza A positive samples (that are not already subtyped) from ICU patients to the San Diego Public Health Laboratory for influenza A subtyping.

Situation

The ongoing global outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) virus among wild birds and poultry have led to sporadic spillover events in mammals, including thirteen human cases.

Background

Of six globally reported cases of HPAI A(H5N1) through May 2023, all six were hospitalized and two died, though with these low case counts, A(H5N1) is currently believed to pose a low risk to the health of the general public. Additionally, the spread of avian influenza viruses from one infected person to a close contact is very rare, and when it has happened, it has only spread to a few people. However, avian influenzas can mutate and gain the ability to spread more easily between people, which requires monitoring for human infection and person-to-person spread.

Actions Requested

1. **Perform influenza testing, including subtyping**, for patients with respiratory illness who are at higher risk for contracting novel or variant influenza, such as those exposed to wild birds, poultry, or swine, which may occur more often during agricultural fair season.
2. **Submit influenza A positive samples**, from **June** through **September 2023**, of **intensive care unit (ICU) patients** not subtyped in clinical laboratories **to local public health laboratories for influenza A subtyping**.
 - Influenza specimens may be sent to Public Health Laboratory (PHL) for confirmation and subtyping.
 - Please contact PHL at (619) 692-8500 before submitting or for questions and use the current PHL Test Request Form found at https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/phs/phs_laboratory/.

Resources and Requests

- [Information on Bird Flu | Avian Influenza \(Flu\) \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Variant Influenza Viruses in Humans | CDC](#)

- [CDFA - AHFSS - AHB - Avian Influenza \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [USDA APHIS | 2022-2023 Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza](#)
- [Viruses of Special Concern | Pandemic Influenza \(Flu\) | CDC](#)

Please contact the Epidemiology Program by telephone (619) 692-8499 or email (EpiDiv.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov) with questions about influenza data. Influenza outbreaks should be reported by telephone to (619) 692-8499.

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch

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Urgent Phone for pm/weekends/holidays: (858) 565-5255

E-mail: cahan@sdcounty.ca.gov

Secure Website: <http://cahan.ca.gov>

Public Website: <http://www.cahansandiego.com>

County COVID-19 Website: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/coronavirus.html>

County Health Professionals Website, [click here](#).