
NEW MEXICO HEALTH ALERT NETWORK (HAN) ALERT
Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Testing Reminder

June 7, 2024

Background:

The New Mexico Department of Health (NMHealth) is asking healthcare providers to call 1-833-796-8773 if they see a patient who has had a high-risk exposure and tests positive for influenza A that is either not subtyped or reported as unsubtypable when using a diagnostic test that is capable of identifying influenza A subtypes (e.g., H1N1). NMHealth is increasing efforts to identify human infections with highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1) by testing persons who have had possible exposure to the virus and who have an influenza A result that is not confirmed to be a seasonal strain. High-risk exposures include close contact with animals, especially dairy cattle, cats, and birds, with suspected or confirmed HPAI A(H5N1). We would like to hear from healthcare providers who see such patients to arrange for further testing if indicated.

Reminder for Clinicians:

Dairy cattle in New Mexico, as well in ten other states tested positive for this virus beginning in March 2024. As of June 4, 2024, one dairy worker in Texas and two dairy workers in Michigan have tested positive for HPAI A(H5N1).

HPAI is a notifiable condition, and clinicians must call NMHealth 1-833-796-8773 to report suspect cases and discuss appropriate testing. HPAI A(H5N1) infection should be considered for patients with 1) clinically compatible symptoms who 2) test positive for influenza A without subtyping available or is reported as unsubtypable, and 3) have had contact with animals or people with suspected or confirmed HPAI A(H5N1) in the previous 10 days or have had any contact with dairy cattle. Possible symptoms vary and include conjunctivitis, upper and lower respiratory infection, and gastrointestinal symptoms. Notably, conjunctivitis appears to be a prominent symptom for cattle-associated human cases. Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests (RIDTs) and PCR tests performed at hospitals and commercial labs are not able to accurately identify HPAI A(H5N1), so confirmatory testing at the New Mexico Scientific Laboratory is needed for any suspect case. **Patients with conjunctivitis should have conjunctival swabs submitted for testing in addition to respiratory specimens.** Testing asymptomatic individuals is not recommended.

Personal Protective Equipment when seeing patients with potential HPAI A(H5N1) infection includes eye protection, gloves, a NIOSH-Approved particulate respirator (e.g., N95® filtering facepiece respirator, ideally fit-tested), and disposable gown.

Additional Resources:

[NMHealth HPAI Information for Clinicians and Providers](#)

[Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus in Animals: Interim Recommendations for Prevention, Monitoring, and Public Health Investigations | Avian Influenza \(Flu\) \(cdc.gov\)](#)

[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 | Avian Influenza \(Flu\) \(cdc.gov\)](#)

New Mexico Health Alert Network: To register for the NM Health Alert Network, please visit the following site <https://nm.readyop.com/fs/4cjZ/10b2> Please fill out the registration form completely and click Submit at the bottom of the page, to begin receiving Important health alerts, advisories, and updates.

Please Note that our system also utilizes text messaging to notify members of important health information. Due to FCC Regulation changes that are designed to decrease the amount of unwanted spam text messages sent each year to citizens, please save, this phone number **(855) 596-1810** as the “**New Mexico Health Alert Network**” default phone number for your account used for text messages on the mobile device(s) you register with us.