

AVIAN INFLUENZA (H5N1) VIRUS

GUIDANCE FOR FARM WORKERS

Avian influenza or “bird flu” is caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) type A viruses. This virus spreads naturally among wild water birds, and can infect domestic poultry (eg., chickens, ducks), other birds (e.g., wild migratory birds), and animal species (e.g., cattle). While bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, some human infections have occurred. People working with infected birds/animals or their environments are at higher risk for developing illness.

Symptoms of the bird flu can include:

Symptoms in humans:

- Fever or feeling feverish
- Eye redness (conjunctivitis)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Seizures



Symptoms in birds:

- Sudden death
- Low energy or appetite
- Reduced egg production
- Cough
- Nasal discharge
- Sneezing
- Diarrhea



Symptoms in animals:

- Sudden death
- Low energy or appetite
- Reduced milk production
- Cough
- Nasal discharge
- Sneezing
- Diarrhea



Report bird/animal illness to
West Virginia Department of
Agriculture:
304-558-2214

Report human illness to the
West Virginia Department of
Health:
304-558-5358 ext. 2



How farm workers can protect themselves:

1 Wear protective clothing when working with sick or dead animals, feces, or milk. This includes: gloves, an N95 respirator if available or, if not available, a well-fitting facemask (e.g., a surgical mask), and eye protection (e.g., goggles).



2 Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after working with birds/animals, all throughout the day, and before eating. Avoid touching your face and mouth.



3 Do not drink raw or unpasteurized milk.
You could get sick from drinking milk from sick cows.



What to do if you are exposed or feel sick:

If you were exposed to avian influenza A viruses, monitor yourself for symptoms for 10 days from your last exposure to infected birds or animals. If you start to experience symptoms, isolate yourself away from others and contact your local health department right away.

