



State of New Jersey

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MEMO

To: Dairy Cattle Producers and Veterinarians

From: Amar Patil, DVM, MVSc, PhD Dipl. ACVM, Director, Division of Animal Health/State Veterinarian

Date: March 26, 2024

RE: USDA Confirms Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Detection in Texas and Kansas Dairy Cattle

State and Federal animal health officials in Kansas, New Mexico, and Texas have recently reported illnesses affecting dairy cattle in lactation. At this time, dry cows and heifers have not displayed clinical signs which include decreased appetite, drop in milk production, thickened milk, abnormal feces, and fever. Of the identified cases, no significant mortality has been reported and the illness can be resolved with symptomatic care. Although the epidemiologic investigation of this animal health issue is still ongoing, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has been detected in clinical samples collected from sick cattle in Kansas and Texas. Testing for HPAI was completed in response to the presence of deceased wild birds on premises with sick cattle. The United States has been facing an HPAI outbreak since 2022. HPAI is a reportable viral disease that primarily affects wild and domestic birds.

No similar cases in cattle have been reported or detected in New Jersey. The state saw a minimal number of HPAI cases – around 600 in birds only in 2022-23– during the current nationwide outbreak of HPAI that resulted in the depopulation of tens of millions of poultry birds across the US. Unlike the cattle cases in Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico, birds infected with HPAI are not treated and must be depopulated to prevent further spread of the disease, which spreads quickly among birds and can be economically devastating to poultry operations.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have begun collaboration to investigate further and monitor the situation. The agencies report that the virus remains a low public health risk and that milk from impacted animals is being diverted or destroyed so that it does not enter the food supply. Therefore, there is no concern for the safety and health of pasteurized dairy consumers. The USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) will conduct further testing to gather information on the virus strain and a better understanding of the transmission to the cattle.

All veterinarians and cattle producers in New Jersey are encouraged to be alert for unusual or unexplained illnesses in their herds. New Jersey farmers and herd veterinarians should evaluate their personal and onsite biosecurity protocols to minimize the risk of exposure to the virus. Cattle farms should identify areas of

potential improvement in biosecurity, including limiting farm access to essential employees only, implementing strategies of wild bird determent, and the use of footbaths at barn entryways. Online resources, such as Secure Milk Supply- Biosecurity <https://securemilksupply.org/milk-producers/biosecurity/> and CFSPH - Biosecurity, <https://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/biosecurity/> can be utilized to tailor a farm-specific biosecurity plan.

Practicing good farm biosecurity, astute monitoring for changes in herd health and milk production, and early reporting to a veterinarian of any clinical signs are critical in safeguarding against the potential spread of the diseases. Cattle showing the clinical signs described above should be isolated from the herd and reported to a veterinarian as well as the New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) Division of Animal Health (DAH) at 609-671-6400. Found deceased wild birds should be reported to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), at 1-877-WARN-DEP (877-927-6337), and disposed of appropriately. The 24-hour number to report a foreign animal disease to USDA APHIS VS Area Veterinarian in Charge is 866-536-7593.

For more information about the current HPAI outbreak visit:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-2022>