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PRO DAIRY
Education & Applied Research

Herd Health and Management **PD-2024-11-04**

Keep your guard up on HPAI

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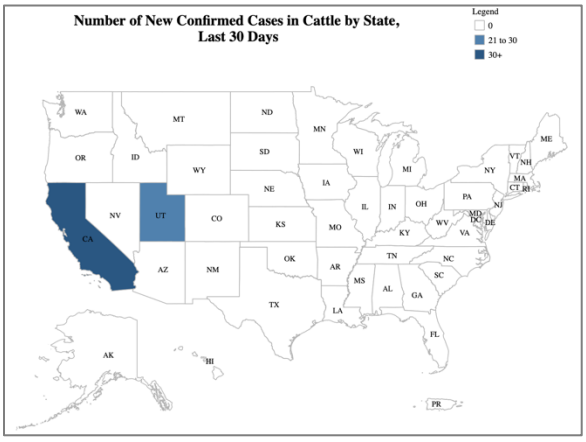
CURRENT DAIRY H5N1 STATUS

We are fortunate that New York state's dairy herds remain free of illness from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

To date 616 dairy herds have been affected in 15 states across the country. This pathogen has caused a great deal of illness and financial loss to the dairy industry. Biosecurity is critical to minimize the spread of this disease.

CHART 1

USDA APHIS confirmed cases map



CALIFORNIA'S EXPERIENCE

HPAI was first confirmed in California in late August. Since then, 398 herds have become infected. California now has more than half of the HPAI herds in our nation's outbreak. The magnitude of the California outbreak is a good example of how quickly this disease can spread in an area where dairy farms are concentrated, as is the case in many areas of New York.

Managing the movement of lactating cattle and strict biosecurity protocols for employees and outside vendors are critical to minimize disease transmission.

The California outbreak occurred during a time of excessive heat stress. As a result, affected herds reported larger drops in herd level milk production, more severe disease in affected animals, and a higher death loss than had been seen in previous state outbreaks.

BIOSECURITY

Although inconvenient, enhanced biosecurity measures remain necessary and have likely helped to keep the virus out of New York so far. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) continues to offer support to both affected and non-affected farms that are looking to review and enhance their biosecurity plans.

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TABLE 1
Biosecurity considerations

Clean and dedicated farm clothing
Proper disinfection of footwear
Limit farm visitations and non-essential off-farm personnel from entering animal pens
Consider redirecting off-farm traffic to not overlap with on-farm traffic
Dedicated or properly cleaned livestock trailers

INTERSTATE MOVEMENT

The importation of dairy cattle into New York from a premise affected with HPAI is prohibited. The spread of this virus is limited by the USDA April 2024 Federal Order that requires a negative Influenza A test result for all lactating dairy cows prior to transport across state lines.

Much of the spread of H5N1 to new herds has resulted from the introduction of new, infected but asymptomatic cows. New York recently instituted a testing requirement for non-lactating dairy cattle over 18 months of age coming from a state with an affected herd within the last 30 days.

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE UPDATE

Affected cows shed high numbers of viral particles in their milk. Raw milk remains the best sample for influenza testing. Many cows can be tested in a single bulk milk sample. Several affected states instituted bulk milk testing.

Many unaffected states have also developed testing programs. Massachusetts (which currently has no affected herds) completed their statewide bulk tank milk influenza testing project in September which confirmed that 100 percent of their herds were free of the virus. Recently Pennsylvania (which currently has no affected herds) announced a bulk milk Influenza A surveillance testing program.

Last month USDA announced a plan to begin a tiered milk sampling strategy to better assess where H5N1 is present nationally, and details are being worked out to begin collecting samples from milk silos sometime in December.

USDA continues to offer the voluntary Dairy Herd Status Program, which through regular bulk tank milk testing, herds can achieve a “Monitored Unaffected Herd” status. This can provide peace of mind that the herd is free of influenza virus and make interstate movement of animals from that herd easier.

POULTRY INDUSTRY IMPACT

HPAI spread from migratory birds is a constant threat to our colleagues in the poultry industry. Dairy herds infected with H5N1 now pose an additional risk. Since the start of the outbreak in dairy cattle, 32 flocks consisting of over 20 million birds have been depopulated from infections with the dairy cattle strain of HPAI (H5N1 strain B3.13). Diligent biosecurity in the dairy industry is critical for the safety of our nation’s poultry flocks.

HUMAN SAFETY

It is important to keep a global health perspective in mind about Influenza A as well. This virus infects and replicates in many animal hosts. Influenza viruses are prone to mutation each time they replicate, creating an opportunity for the virus to develop a strain that can more easily infect humans, and spread from person to person. If this were to happen, we would experience another global pandemic. Thankfully, this has not happened yet.

The Influenza A virus is known to occasionally infect humans, particularly those exposed to high levels of the virus.

Because of this, individuals working closely with potentially infected animals and raw milk from those animals should take extra precautions to limit their exposure. Eye protection, disposable gloves, and face masks/shields should be made available to those employees. Frequent hand washing and simply not touching your face when working with cows or raw milk should also be encouraged.

SUPPORT REMINDERS

USDA continues to cover all costs associated with Influenza A testing on dairy farms, up to $1,500 per premises. Diagnostic options include testing of clinically ill cows, asymptomatic cows, other domestic animals and wildlife found dead on the premises, and bulk tank milk. Discuss these testing options with your veterinarian and local NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets field veterinarian.

TABLE 2

USDA HPAI support programs

Non-Affected Herds
Diagnostic testing (sample collection, shipping, and testing)
Biosecurity planning
In-line milk sampling installation

Affected Herds
Diagnostic testing (sample collection, shipping, and testing)
Costs incurred for treating HPAI infected cattle
In-line milk sampling installation
Biosecurity planning
Worker PPE and/or laundry service*
Financial assistance to dairy producers who incur milk losses due to HPAI
Heat treatment system installations

* Pending their workers' participation in a USDA-CDC workplace and farmworker study)

UPCOMING INDUSTRY HPAI WEBINAR

PRO-DAIRY will be co-hosting another HPAI in Dairy Herds webinar with Northeast Dairy Producers Association (NEDPA) and NY Farm Bureau (NYFB) to help keep our industry informed about this disease threat. Details and registration information will be shared when the webinar is scheduled.

LINKS TO H5N1 RESOURCES

- USDA APHIS: detections of HPAI in Livestock
- New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
- NMPF HPAI Resources
- CDC Information for Workers Exposed to H5N1

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