



Hazard alert

What workers should know about avian flu caused by the H5N1 influenza virus

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a viral infection that can infect dairy cattle, wild birds, poultry flocks, and other animals in the United States. Commonly referred to as bird flu, avian influenza is caused by [influenza A type viruses](#), but the disease varies in severity depending on the influenza variant and the species affected. The variants include low pathogenicity and highly pathogenic viruses:

- Low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses
- Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses, including H5N1.

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) is [actively monitoring](#) HPAI detections for outbreaks in Oregon.

Who may be exposed?

People are at greater risk of infection if they have close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals, or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals. Included are:

- Poultry and livestock farmers and workers
- Backyard bird flock owners
- Veterinarians and veterinary staff
- Animal health responders
- Public health responders

- Slaughterhouse workers performing certain tasks on lactating dairy cattle, including:
 - Unloading or handling live lactating dairy cattle for slaughter, including workers in holding pens and involved with antemortem inspection
 - Postmortem processes including the postmortem inspection and handling and transporting viscera
 - Removing and transporting udders from dairy cattle for further processing or rendering





Other potential exposure sources include:

- Feces or litter
- Water (from ponds, buckets, pans, and troughs, for example) that might be contaminated with waste from potentially infected animals
- Raw milk
- Viscera and udders from lactating dairy cattle

Source: [CDC](#)

Influenza symptoms in people may include:

- Fever (temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more) or feeling chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Eye tearing, redness, or irritation
- Headaches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Diarrhea

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [advises those](#) who may have been exposed to potentially infected animals or animal products to monitor themselves for respiratory illness symptoms and conjunctivitis (eye tearing, redness, or irritation) for at least 10 days. Those who have these symptoms should notify their employer and seek medical attention from their health care provider or local public health department.

How to protect yourself when working with animals

Avoid unprotected direct or close physical contact with:

- Sick birds, livestock, or other animals
- Carcasses of birds, livestock, or other animals that have died from unknown causes
- Raw milk
- Viscera and udders from lactating dairy cattle
- Feces or litter
- Surfaces and water (e.g., ponds, waterers, buckets, pans, troughs) on farms with potentially infected animals that might be contaminated with animal waste

Use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Wash your hands with soap and water, then put on PPE in this order:

1. Fluid-resistant coveralls
2. Waterproof apron
3. NIOSH-approved respirator such as an N95 filtering facepiece respirator or elastomeric half-mask respirator
4. Properly fitted unvented or indirectly-vented safety goggles or face shield
5. Head cover or hair cover
6. Gloves
7. Boots

While wearing PPE:

- Use separate designated clean areas: one for putting on PPE and one for taking off PPE.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth after touching any contaminated material.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, vape, chew gum, dip tobacco, or use the bathroom.

Follow these steps to safely remove PPE:

1. Remove the apron, if worn.
2. Clean and disinfect your boots.
3. Remove your boots.
4. Remove your coveralls.
5. Remove your gloves.
6. Wash your hands with soap and water or, if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
7. Remove your head cover or hair cover.
8. Remove your goggles or face shield, and then remove your respirator.
9. Wash your hands again with soap and water, or if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

After removing PPE:

- Shower at the end of the work shift.
- Leave all contaminated clothing at work.
- Watch for symptoms of illness while you are working with potentially sick animals or materials. Continue watching for symptoms for 10 days after finishing working. If you get sick, tell your supervisor and talk with a doctor.

Reusable and disposable PPE:

- While removing PPE, appropriately dispose of all disposable PPE and set aside reusable PPE.
- Clean and disinfect reusable PPE after every use.

Source: [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov)

Oregon OSHA requirements for personal protective equipment, hazard assessment, and respiratory protection

For agriculture employers:

- General requirements for protective equipment: OAR [437-004-1005](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/437-004-1005)
- Hazard assessment and equipment selection: OAR [437-004-1005\(2\)](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/437-004-1005(2))
- Respiratory protection: OAR [437-004-1041](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/437-004-1041)

For other employers:

- Personal protective equipment: OAR [437-002-0134](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/437-002-0134)
- Hazard assessment and equipment selection: OAR [437-002-0134\(1\)](https://www.oregon.gov/OSHA/Pages/437-002-0134(1))
- Respiratory protection: 29 CFR [1910.134](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-29/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-1910/subpart-1910.134)

More information

- 📄 [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\): Current Bird Flu Summary](https://www.cdc.gov/birdflu/summary)
- 📄 [Federal OSHA: Bird Flu Fact Sheet](https://www.osha-slc.gov/bird-flu)

