

Risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Influenza A (H5N1) in Cats and Raw Pet Food

February 3, 2025

Two Orange County cats have been diagnosed with presumptive HPAI influenza A (H5N1). These animals reportedly consumed raw pet food sold at a farmers' market. No transmission to humans has been identified at this time.

Veterinary providers should consider HPAI infection when evaluating ill pets, particularly cats, with a history of consumption of raw milk or raw food. Ill cats can have influenza testing performed by commercial veterinary diagnostic labs. For animals that die and are suspected of being infected with HPAI, the HCA Communicable Disease Control Division should be contacted at (714) 834-8180; we can arrange for postmortem testing of animal brains, at the HCA's Public Health Laboratory.

Provider Recommendations

Prevention

- Educate animal owners of the risks, to themselves and their pets, of raw milk and raw food products, <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/get-facts-raw-pet-food-diets-can-be-dangerous-you-and-your-pet>. Cats also could come in contact with HPAI from exposure to wild birds or poultry.
- For ill animals with potential HPAI, providers should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) per CDC guidance [Considerations for Veterinarians: Evaluating and Handling of Cats Potentially Exposed to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A\(H5N1\) Virus](#).

Additional Resources

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health - [Animal Health Alert: H5 Bird Flu confirmed in three additional domestic cats in Los Angeles County and in one commercially available raw pet food product](#)
- California Department of Public Health - [What Veterinarians Need to Know about Bird Flu](#)
- CDC - [What Causes Bird Flu in Pets and Other Animals](#)
- FDA - [Cat and Dog Food Manufacturers Required to Consider H5N1 in Food Safety Plans](#)

For questions or concerns, providers can contact the **HCA Communicable Disease Control Division at (714) 834-8180**.