



PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

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First Case of Avian Influenza in SLO County

The first confirmed case of avian influenza A (H5N1) has been identified in SLO County. The case was identified in a Canada goose that has since died. While the risk remains low for the general public, people who are exposed to infected birds are at greater risk of infection. To date, there has been only one documented human case in the United States associated with this outbreak.

Clinicians are advised to be alert for the possibility of avian influenza A (H5N1) infection in persons showing signs or symptoms of respiratory illness who have relevant exposure history. Clinicians are asked to send specimens for testing and report such cases to the Public Health Department.

Background

This case of avian influenza was detected in a wild goose collected from the City of San Luis Obispo. It is likely we will see more cases of avian influenza detected, as this strain is highly pathogenic among birds. Risk of bird-to-human transmission remains low, especially if hygienic measures are taken and PPE is worn while in close contact with sick or dead birds.

Prevention

Flu vaccines are recommended for any individual who may be exposed to avian influenza. Vaccination should take place two weeks prior to exposure to be considered protective. While seasonal flu vaccination might not prevent infection, it can reduce the risk of severe disease as well as the risk of co-infection with human and bird flu viruses.

Infected, well-appearing, sick or dead birds can shed the virus in their saliva, mucus and feces. Human infections remain rare but have occurred most often after unprotected contact with an infected bird or surface contaminated with the virus. Those who have close contact with birds (such as through working in agriculture or keeping backyard chickens) should [follow safe handling practices](#) and avoid direct contact with sick or dead birds and the feces or litter from birds that appear sick. If working with birds that may be sick, it is important to wear [recommended personal protective equipment](#) (including N95 respirators, eye protection, and gloves) and wash hands afterwards. Bird handlers, including backyard chicken handlers, should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling.

Post-exposure

Any individual exposed to a bird with confirmed avian influenza should contact the County's Public Health Department immediately by calling (805)-781-5500. After exposure to any sick or dead bird, individuals should self-monitor for 10 days and contact their health care provider immediately if they experience any symptoms. Symptoms include cough, sore throat, conjunctivitis, fever, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, muscle or body aches, and diarrhea.

Public Health Department

2191 Johnson Avenue | San Luis Obispo, CA 93401 | (P) 805-781-5500 | (F) 805-781-5543

www.slopublichealth.org

Testing

Specimens may be sent to commercial laboratories or the Public Health Laboratory. For specimens sent to the Public Health Laboratory, please use a nasopharyngeal swab in viral transport media; an additional oropharyngeal swab is not needed. Please note suspected avian influenza A (H5N1) in the order.

Treatment

Initiation of antiviral treatment with a neuraminidase inhibitor is recommended as soon as possible for any patient with suspected or confirmed infection with an avian influenza A virus. This includes patients who are confirmed cases, probable cases, or cases under investigation, even if more than 48 hours has elapsed since illness onset and regardless of illness severity (outpatients or hospitalized patients). Treatment with oral or enterically administered oseltamivir (twice daily x 5 days) is recommended regardless of time since onset of symptoms. If the patient has been sick for 2 days or less, oral baloxavir treatment is an option. Antiviral treatment should not be delayed while waiting for laboratory test results. [See details from CDC.](#)

To report suspected cases

Call the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department as soon as possible. Call 805-781-5500 (M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.) or 805-781-4553 (weekends and after hours).

For more information

For more information about avian influenza, please visit:
www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu/avian-flu-summary.htm