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## Human Case of Bird Flu Confirmed in Stanislaus County

**Stanislaus County** - Stanislaus County Public Health, in coordination with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has confirmed a human case of H5N1 avian influenza, also known as bird flu, in a Stanislaus County resident who had contact with infected dairy cattle. The affected individual had mild symptoms and was treated with antiviral medications.

Bird flu is caused by strains of the flu virus that primarily infect birds and can spread quickly among them. They are novel influenza viruses, which differ from the seasonal flu virus strains that commonly circulate among humans. Bird flu can sometimes infect other animals and humans. A strain of bird flu, H5N1, is currently widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in dairy cows and commercial poultry operations in the United States. H5N1 bird flu was first detected in California dairy cows in August 2024.

Unlike the seasonal flu and other respiratory viruses like COVID-19, there is no evidence currently of person-to-person spread of the H5N1 bird flu virus. Instead, nearly all US cases of H5N1 bird flu are linked to direct and close contact with infected animals. The CDC and the CDPH report that **the risk to the general public is very low at this time**. People interacting with infected animals are at higher risk of getting bird flu. Wearing proper PPE helps prevent infection. Public Health has been actively working alongside industry partners to distribute PPE to farmworkers.

Cows infected with bird flu can shed the virus in their milk. Pasteurized milk and dairy products continue to be safe to consume because pasteurization kills the H5N1 virus and other harmful bacteria and viruses.

"While the risk to the general population remains low, we want to ensure that those working with infected animals take proper precautions by using PPE," stated Dr. Thea Papasozomenos, Stanislaus County Public Health Officer. "Exposed workers who have symptoms can reach out to Public Health if they need assistance getting evaluated and tested."

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People exposed to infected animals should monitor for the following symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure: eye redness (conjunctivitis), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea, vomiting, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue, trouble breathing, and fever. If they start to feel sick, they should immediately isolate, notify Public Health, and work with Public Health and healthcare providers to get timely testing and treatment. Exposed workers with symptoms can notify Stanislaus County Public Health at **209-558-7535** or [CDNurse@schsa.org](mailto:CDNurse@schsa.org).

Public Health recommends that all residents, especially workers at risk for exposure to bird flu, receive a seasonal flu vaccine. While the vaccine will not protect against bird flu, it can significantly decrease the likelihood of at-risk workers being infected with both viruses at the same time and reduce the chance of severe illness from seasonal flu.

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