

What dairy farmers need to know about H5N1 testing

Why do producers need to test?

Testing helps identify and isolate cases, minimizing the virus's circulation and protecting both livestock and workers. Plus, tracking the virus helps us understand how it changes and spreads, reducing the risk of it becoming more harmful to cattle and other animals. The USDA provides up to \$2,000 per premises for veterinary fees to collect H5N1 samples, easing the financial burden of testing.

Recent HPAI outbreaks on Minnesota poultry farms have been traced back to strains from cattle, highlighting the importance of monitoring dairy herds.

What does testing look like?

Samples can be collected by your herd veterinarian and submitted independently, or if herd is exhibiting clinical signs, the Board of Animal Health can send staff to collect samples. Milk will be sampled from sick, lactating animals and sent to the University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (VDL). If samples are negative for H5N1, the producer and herd vet can treat the herd or pursue additional diagnostics.

What about a H5N1 positive result?

- All results are confidential. The Board only releases information at the county level. Example, “A positive cow in Ramsey County.”
- The VDL reports non-negative results to the Board which alerts the producer and implements no movement of animals while confirmation testing takes place.
- Samples are sent to the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories for official confirmation, which is required for financial reimbursement.
- USDA confirms results to the Board:
 - Board contacts producer to provide guidance, and work on epidemiology and disease tracing.
 - Lactating dairy cows on the premises cannot be moved off-site for 30 days unless approved by the Board. Retest after 30 days.

Is there financial support for positive cases?

If you don't test, you will be guaranteed \$0 in financial support. Premises with NVSL confirmed results can access up to \$28,000 in financial assistance from the USDA.