



California Declares State of Emergency Over Bird Flu Outbreak

California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in response to the detection of Avian Influenza A (H5N1), commonly known as bird flu, in dairy cows in Southern California. [The proclamation](#) is ostensibly intended to bolster state response efforts and increase coordination between agencies. However, serious questions arise concerning the necessity of the measure, given the low public health risk associated with the virus and its limited impact on human health and food safety.



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Declaration

Governor Newsom framed the declaration as a necessary step to accelerate the state's response and safeguard public health.

"This proclamation is a targeted action to ensure government agencies have the resources and flexibility they need to respond quickly to this outbreak," said Newsom. He added,

Building on California's testing and monitoring system — the largest in the nation — we are committed to further protecting public health, supporting our agriculture industry, and ensuring that Californians have access to accurate, up-to-date information.

While admitting that "the risk to the public remains low," the governor promised to "continue to take all necessary steps to prevent the spread of this virus."

Measures

California's public-health agencies, including the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), and the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), are taking action to monitor and control the spread of H5N1. These agencies are implementing various measures to address the outbreak. These measures include expanded testing at dairy farms to identify infections early and track the virus's presence in livestock populations.

The state is distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) to farm workers who have direct contact with animals. The measure is intended to reduce the likelihood of infections during routine tasks such as feeding, milking, and handling livestock.

The state has also launched a public-information campaign in an effort to target dairy and poultry workers through multilingual outreach, ensuring that the information reaches agricultural workers who [not speak English](#) or have limited access to health-related guidance.

Additionally, California is now offering vaccination support to agricultural workers to potentially reduce the risk of concurrent infections with the seasonal flu. "The seasonal flu vaccine protects against serious illness from seasonal flu and may reduce the chance of human and bird flu viruses mixing and



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becoming more dangerous,” CDPH claims.

Low Risk to Humans

While Governor Newsom outlined the emergency declaration as a “targeted action” to protect public health, experts in animal health and food safety maintain that the virus poses minimal risk to humans and is not a threat to the food supply.

[According](#) to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), bird flu infections in humans are exceedingly rare. They only occur when people have close, prolonged contact with infected animals. As of the November 18 update, the CDC recorded a total of 52 human cases of bird flu, all farm workers. The agency noted that all of the patients experienced mild symptoms and never required hospitalizations. The virus does not spread through human-to-human transmission.

First Severe Case

Newsom’s declaration coincided with the first reported severe human case of bird flu in the United States. According to the CDC, a patient hospitalized in Louisiana was exposed to sick and dead birds from a backyard flock. This marks the first U.S. case linked to such exposure. The agency emphasizes that no person-to-person transmission has been detected. It maintained that the overall risk to the public remains low.

The Louisiana Department of Health [informed CNN](#) that the patient “is older than 65 and has underlying medical conditions that increased their risk of flu complications.”

As reported by [The New American](#) in June, Western countries, including the United States, consider bird flu to have strong pandemic potential because of its possible mutations. In response, they are ramping up vaccine production. It appears that efforts to shape public perception of the threat posed by the virus are well underway. Earlier in December, *Scientific American* — a prominent mainstream pop-science journal known for its left-leaning bias — [posted](#) that bird flu is “just one mutation away” from becoming more infectious in humans.

Low Risk to Food Supply

The CDC emphasizes that cooking meat, poultry, and pasteurizing dairy products effectively destroys the virus, making them safe for consumption.

“There is no evidence that people in the U.S. have been infected with bird flu after eating properly cooked chicken or poultry,” the CDC states on its [official website](#). This also applies to milk, as commercial pasteurization kills pathogens, including influenza viruses.

The CDFA echoed this message, noting that the presence of bird flu in dairy cows does not affect the safety of dairy products. “Pasteurized milk and dairy items, as well as properly handled meat and eggs, continue to be safe to consume,” asserts the department.

the CDPH [reiterated](#) this message in a Wednesday update.

Cattle Health and Culling Concerns

While primarily affecting birds, bird flu has been detected in dairy cows [across the United States](#). In cows, the virus is often identified through testing rather than symptoms. When symptoms appear, they typically present as mild issues. They include reduced appetite, lower milk production, and changes in milk quality. Unlike its rapid spread in birds, the virus spreads slowly among cows. This allows farmers to manage it through isolation, disinfection, and enhanced biosecurity protocols, such as proper



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sanitation practices.

Despite the availability of these containment measures, health officials in multiple states have opted for culling of infected herds. This approach seems excessive given the limited spread of the virus in cows and the effectiveness of available treatments. In California, culling rates have reached as high as 20 percent in some herds. This is significantly higher than the national average of two percent, according to [Reuters](#).

The rationale for culling remains unclear, especially since the virus poses no long-term threat to cattle health or the safety of dairy products.

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