

July 1, 2024

Subject: Personal protective equipment (PPE) available to dairy producers for one-time order at no cost

Dear Vermont Dairy Industry Partners:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also called bird flu, is a virus that usually spreads between birds and other animals they encounter. Influenza A (H5N1) is a strain of bird flu that has been spreading for a couple years in the United States and globally. In Spring 2024, it was first detected in dairy cows, with several human cases of mild illness reported in workers exposed to infected cows. [Learn more about the current situation from CDC.](#)

The current risk of influenza A (H5N1) to the general public is low. It's uncertain what the risk is among people who work with potentially infected animals or materials, including dairy cows and raw milk. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and the Vermont Department of Health are partnering to prepare for possible cases of H5N1 HPAI among Vermont dairy cows to protect the workforce, animals, and the farming industry.

As part of the national response, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has asked jurisdictions to make personal protective equipment (PPE) available at no-cost to workers on dairy farms and raw milk handlers/processors. Dairy industry partners can make a one-time order of supplies from the State of Vermont for free. Additional PPE will be made available if H5N1 is detected on Vermont premises. Supplies available include N-95 masks/filtering facepiece (FFP) respirators, surgical masks, goggles, face shields, fluid-resistant coveralls, boot/shoe covers, and gloves. **If you are interested in receiving PPE from the state, please complete this [brief form](#) to indicate your interest.** This is not an order form and additional information will be required before the PPE can be distributed.

Before ordering, please review PPE options under CDC's guidance for [Reducing Risk for People Working with or Exposed to Animals](#). We recognize that the full recommendations may be challenging to implement in many settings. When worn correctly, PPE can help protect workers from infected animals and environments.

We strongly encourage all people who come into contact with poultry and cattle to take steps to protect themselves and their community from H5N1 infection, including:

- Wash your hands after any contact with animals or animal products, including unpasteurized milk.





- Clean your boots or wear boot covers to prevent the spread of germs when walking into other non-work areas, especially eating and sleeping areas.
- Protect your eyes and mouth by using a face shield or goggles and surgical mask to protect from splash and respiratory droplets.
- Contact your veterinarian right away if an animal is showing signs of sickness.

Additional Resources

- [Avian Influenza \(Bird Flu\) in Humans](#) (Vermont Department of Health)
- [HPAI in Dairy Cows – An Emerging Animal Health Issue](#) (Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets)
- [Reducing Risk for People Working with or Exposed to Animals](#) (CDC)
- Handout: “Protect Yourself from H5N1 When Working With Farm Animals” ([English](#)/[Spanish](#)) (CDC)
- [Milk Safety During Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Outbreaks](#) (FDA)
- [State of Vermont PPE Request Form](#)

Thank you for your partnership in this effort. If you have questions about the contents of this letter or about personal protective equipment to prevent human illnesses, please contact the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7200.

Sincerely,

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