



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Update

DECEMBER 26, 2024 - H5N1 HPAI CONFIRMED IN DOMESTIC CAT

Key Points

- One indoor-only, domestic cat in Washington County, Oregon died after consuming commercially prepared raw pet food. **The cat was tested and confirmed to be infected with H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza.**
- The cat's infection was linked to samples from the frozen raw cat food through PCR testing and whole genome sequencing (WGS).
- Northwest Naturals of Portland, Oregon is voluntarily recalling **Northwest Naturals brand 2lb Feline Turkey Recipe raw & frozen pet food** after it tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus.
 - The recalled product is packaged in 2-pound plastic bags with "Best if used by" dates of 05/21/26 B10 and 06/23/2026 B1. The product was sold through distributors in AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, IL, MD, MI, MN, OR, PA, RI and WA in the United States, and British Columbia in Canada.
- Veterinarians should specifically ask pet owners about exposure to raw milk and raw diets, share information about the risk of raw milk and raw diets, and caution pet owners not to offer raw products to pets.
- Animal health staff should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when in contact with animals suspected or confirmed of being infected with HPAI, acutely sick animals that have history of exposure to raw milk, wild birds, or raw or undercooked animal products.
- **REPORT** suspected cases of HPAI in cats and other animals to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (503-986-4711) – testing for the virus is available at no charge to veterinarians or owners.

Background

On December 24, 2024, the Oregon Department of Agriculture announced the detection of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in a domestic cat in Washington County, Oregon, and the subsequent recall of a raw pet food that is believed to have been the source of infection. While cats have been known to be susceptible to this strain of HPAI since 2022, this case is somewhat unique in that the cat was an indoor-only cat who's only known exposure was a commercial raw-food diet. The food implicated in this infection is being voluntarily recalled by the manufacturer, but this case highlights the evolving nature of this virus, as well as the zoonotic risks that are inherent to veterinary medicine.

Over the past 3 years, the H5N1 HPAI virus has been shown to infect many mammal species (in addition to poultry and many other avian species). While HPAI is typically a respiratory virus in its natural hosts, ingestion is an important route of infection in most species, especially mammals. Mammal infections typically result in acute to per-acute neurological symptoms and encephalitis, although the symptoms are dose-dependent and in some mammal cases with minimal exposures, symptoms may be mild to moderate, and patients may recover.

HPAI should be considered as a rule out in encephalitis or other cases exhibiting neurological symptoms or acute respiratory distress without a clear disease process diagnosed. A history of exposure to sick poultry, wild waterfowl, or consumption of raw milk, raw meat or raw pet food are important risk factors for consideration. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in any species is immediately reportable to the Oregon Department of Agriculture. If you suspect HPAI, please contact the State Veterinarian at 503-986-4711 immediately (before initiating diagnostic testing), while the patient is still in your clinic.

Because of the zoonotic potential, additional precautions also should be taken to protect clinic staff with any patient where HPAI is suspected. At a minimum, the [CDC high-risk personal protective equipment \(PPE\) guidance](#) should be followed whenever handling a patient with suspected HPAI.

Actions Requested of Veterinarians and Animal Health Staff

- **Share information about the pet food recall with pet owners. Counsel pet owners about the risks to both human and pet health when feeding raw diets.**
 - [Northwest Naturals Pet Food Recall Announcement](#)
- **Identify potential cases of HPAI in pets.** Consider HPAI in patients that:
 - Have had exposure to/ingested raw milk, wild birds, raw meat, or raw meat products, or
 - Are exhibiting neurologic signs (including seizures, nystagmus, or blindness) or other symptoms of HPAI (fever, severe lethargy, icterus, hepatopathy, tachypnea, uveitis, acute respiratory distress) that cannot be clearly explained by another disease process.
- **Take a detailed diet history for each patient.** If raw dairy, raw poultry, or raw meat products were fed, obtain names, lot numbers, best before dates of each product and when they were fed. Pictures of the front and back surfaces of each product are very helpful, as well as an image of the receipt from where it was purchased. Both opened and unopened products can be kept sealed in plastic bags and frozen until further instructions are received.
- **Veterinarians, veterinary staff, and animal health workers should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)** when having direct contact with sick pets that have a history of exposure to sources of HPAI or that are suspected or confirmed to have HPAI.
- **Veterinary facilities should be prepared to discuss reported cases with the Oregon Department of Agriculture,** provide medical records, and owner/contact information. Additional information about staff exposed to sick animals also will need to be provided to public health officials to facilitate monitoring and protection of employee health.
- **If you are seeing a potential case of HPAI in an animal in Oregon**
 - **What to do**
 - Place the animal in isolation
 - Limit the number of staff handling the animal as much as possible
 - Instruct staff to wear appropriate PPE, which includes an N95 mask, gloves, eye protection, shoe protection, and a gown at a minimum.
 - Collect detailed information about the potential exposure to HPAI, including a detailed dietary history as described above, noting any exposure to raw meat, raw milk, raw pet food, wild birds or other animals known or suspected to be infected with HPAI
 - **Report the suspected case to the Oregon Department of Agriculture immediately**
 - Call the State Veterinarian at 503-987-4711 immediately (before initiating diagnostic testing), while the patient is still in your clinic.
 - **What to Expect**
 - ODA staff will collect case history and owner contact information.
 - The State Veterinarian or one of our District Veterinarians will discuss the case with you and provide instructions on next steps for diagnostic testing.
 - ODA will provide free testing for reported suspected HPAI cases through the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at OSU.
 - If the animal tests positive:
 - An ODA District veterinarian will follow up with the attending veterinarian and owner to learn more about the case and provide next steps if needed.
 - The County Public Health Authority will contact all staff that handled the animal in order to monitor their health for 10 days after the last exposure, as well as offer testing and post-exposure treatment if indicated.
- Veterinarians are encouraged to contact ODA with any questions by email: StateVet@oda.oregon.gov, or by phone: 503-986-4711.

Resources

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) – [HPAI in Poultry](#)

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) – [HPAI in Livestock](#)
- Oregon Health Authority (OHA) – [Avian Influenza information](#)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA) – [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) Detections in Mammals](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Considerations for Veterinarians: Evaluating and Handling of Cats Potentially Exposed to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza A \(H5N1\) Virus](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [Influenza in Animals](#)
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – [H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation](#)

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