



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
PROVIDER HEALTH ADVISORY

Date: July 6, 2023

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Request to Submit Specimens from Patients Receiving Intensive Care for Influenza A to the Public Health Laboratory

In response to the global outbreak in birds of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A(H5N1), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) are encouraging continued testing for influenza this summer among persons with severe respiratory illness or who are exposed to poultry or swine.

- Healthcare providers should always consider influenza testing (and subtyping) for patients with respiratory illness who are at higher risk for contracting novel or variant influenza (exposed to wild birds, poultry, or swine, which may occur more often during agricultural fair season).
- Throughout the year, any samples that are influenza A positive and for which subtyping was attempted but did not identify a seasonal influenza subtype should be reported to your local health department and urgently directed to a local public health laboratory for additional testing.
- In addition, during June through September 2023, **influenza A positive samples from patients in the intensive care unit (ICU) not subtyped in clinical laboratories are requested to be submitted to local public health laboratories for subtyping.** This is an important step for continued surveillance of A(H5N1) and for enhanced detection of novel or variant influenza cases.

Reporting to County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department

- Fax: 805-781-5543
- Phone: 805-781-5500 (M-F, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.); 805-781-4553 (weekends and after hours)
- Laboratory address for sending specimens: 2191 Johnson Avenue, San Luis Obispo, CA

As a reminder, human infection with any novel influenza A virus should be [reported](#) to County of SLO Public Health **immediately upon suspicion.**

Background

The ongoing global outbreak of HPAI A(H5N1) has caused the worst domestic poultry outbreak on record, with more than 58 million poultry affected in the U.S. to date. Thirteen human cases have been reported globally, including one in the U.S. Of the globally reported cases, six were hospitalized and two have died.

Currently, A(H5N1) is believed to pose a low risk to the health of the general public. In addition, the spread of avian influenza viruses from one infected person to a close contact is very rare, and when it has happened, it has only spread to a few people. However, because of the

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possibility that avian influenza viruses could change and gain the ability to spread easily between people, **monitoring for human infection and person-to-person spread is extremely important for public health.**

For more information on avian influenza, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/avianflu.

To watch a recording of the COCA call, “What Providers Need to Know about Zoonotic Influenza,” visit https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2023/callinfo_062023.asp.