



NEWSLETTER

Volume 66 / April 2025



Message From the Chief

By: Mandy Murray, DVM, MPVM, PhD, AHB Branch Chief



Happy Spring.

What a few months it has been! Here at the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) it has been all-hands-on-deck for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak with everyone either working on the outbreak or maintaining other critical Branch functions, including the roll-out of the new ADT rule and ongoing Foreign Animal Disease investigations in swine, equine, and sheep.

This was the largest outbreak California has ever seen with over 750 dairies, almost 70 commercial poultry operations, and 10 backyard poultry farms affected by HPAI between August 2024 and the end of March 2025. Due to the size of this outbreak and the need to run almost 3,000 diagnostic and surveillance tests per week, we utilized not only the California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) laboratory, but also the support of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) to manage the testing load. The NAHLN was created to provide surge capacity for just this type of situation. At the height of the response from October through Mid-January, we had around 170 CDFA and USDA responders involved in the incident on any given day. As this was the first outbreak of its kind in dairy, we had to create and update policy as the outbreak unfolded.

As we enter spring with warmer, dryer weather, and this recent incident starts to wind down – all poultry control areas have now been released, and more and more dairies are released from quarantine every week – we are starting the process of evaluating the response and determining what could be done differently for the next outbreak. We are grateful for our colleagues and partners at USDA, CAHFS, and the NAHLN; our poultry and dairy industry partners; UC Davis and other researchers; and our producers. Working together, we can continue to support California’s animal agriculture as we face both known and unknown challenges.

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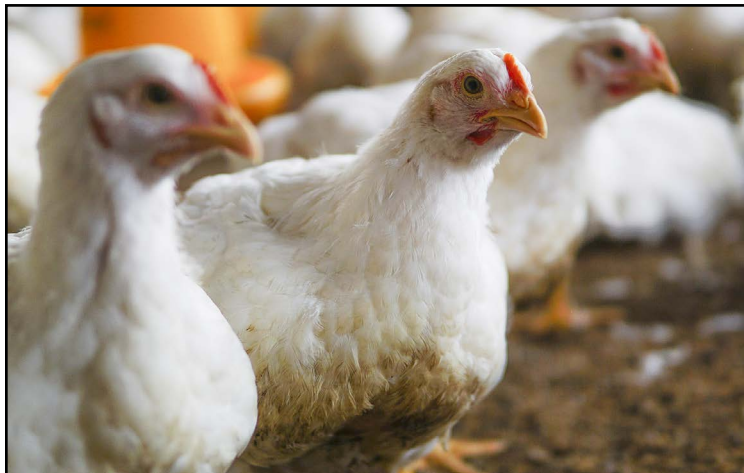
H5N1 Bird Flu Update in California

By: Felicia Pohl, Research Scientist II, Laura Bradley, DVM, and Nicki Humphrey, DVM

Avian

H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) was first detected in the United States on February 8, 2022, and has since been confirmed in domestic poultry in 780 commercial flocks and 900 backyard flocks affecting 168.33 million birds across 51 states (including Puerto Rico). On August 11, 2022, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) and the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) confirmed California's first case of HPAI in domestic poultry from a backyard flock in Sacramento County. As of April 9, 2025, HPAI has affected 105 commercial flocks, 39 backyard flocks, and over 23 million domestic poultry cumulatively across California. California achieved *HPAI Free in Poultry* status on June 13, 2024, but was re-infected on September 18, 2024, in a commercial turkey flock in Merced County. Since the most recent outbreak started with its first detection in August of 2024, HPAI has affected 68 commercial flocks, 11 backyard flocks, and over 16.75 million birds in the state of California to date.

On January 29, 2025, a different strain of avian influenza (H5N9) was detected for the first time in California in a commercial duck flock in Merced County. This strain was found in addition to H5N1 also on the same farm. This finding is not unexpected or alarming since ducks serve as a reservoir host for influenza A viruses and there is evidence that the H5N9 virus is a North American N9 reassortant of the H5N1 virus that has been seen in wild birds since 2022 with periodic spillover into domestic flocks. CDFA and USDA remain vigilant for any H5 viruses and will continue to monitor for new or unusual viruses as part of our ongoing testing



strategy.

Currently, there is no indication that this H5N9 reassortant/strain presents any increased risk to public health. There is still no known demonstration of human-to-human transmission of the bird flu virus. Public health agencies and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) continue to monitor for any impacts from the bird flu strains.

Avian influenza viruses continue to circulate normally among migratory and wild birds; as such, we strongly recommend that all poultry owners implement enhanced biosecurity practices regardless of California's HPAI status. The California State Veterinarian has also extended the [recommendation](#) to keep all poultry indoors through June 2025.

Clinical signs of HPAI in poultry include sudden death, trouble breathing, clear runny discharge (from nose, mouth, and eyes), lethargy, decreased food and water intake, swelling (eyes, head, wattles, or combs), discolored or bruised comb, wattles, or legs, stumbling/falling or twisted neck.

Bovine

In March 2024, there was a single incident of H5N1 Avian Influenza that infected a dairy in Texas. This single point infection led to the current outbreak of Bovine Influenza A H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b genotype B3.13 across the U.S. On August 30, 2024, California dairies located in the Central Valley tested

positive for this virus. As of April 9, 2025, there have been a total of 1,005 affected dairies across 17 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, Idaho, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah,

and Wyoming), one alpaca herd in Idaho, and one case in swine in Oregon ([USDA HPAI Detections in Livestock webpage](#)). As of April 9, 2025, CDFA has confirmed five new cases of H5N1 Bird Flu in California dairies within the past 30 days, for a cumulative total of 769 infected dairies detected in California since August 2024.

When a dairy is affected, it is placed under quarantine (this includes movement restrictions) and enhanced biosecurity measures are implemented to prevent the spread of the virus. Sick cows are isolated and are treated at the dairies. Herds may only be released from quarantine after a demonstrated absence of clinical signs and three consecutive weeks of negative bulk tank samples. Surveillance through milk sampling across the state of California is ongoing. Most infected livestock and dairy cattle can fully recover from H5N1 infection within a few weeks. As of April 4, 2025, 542 affected dairies have been released from quarantine but will continue to be monitored through milk testing for early virus detection. [Review](#) the current requirements for H5N1 dairy cow quarantine release requirements.

On October 30, 2024, H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype D1.1 was detected in a single pig on a premises in Oregon that contained affected backyard poultry. On February 6, 2025, the NVSL confirmed

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genotype D1.1 in dairy cattle in Nevada. According to USDA, "This is the first detection of this virus genotype in dairy cattle (all previous detections in dairy cattle have been HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype B3.13). The D1.1 genotype was later confirmed in an Arizona dairy herd on February 13, 2025, although genetic sequencing indicates the Nevada and Arizona cases represent separate introductions. Genotype D1.1 represents the predominant genotype in the North American flyways this past fall and winter and has been identified in wild birds, mammals, and spillovers into domestic poultry." Epidemiology of spread to this point has demonstrated both cow-to-cow and cow-to-poultry transmission with no confirmed cases of commercial poultry-to-cow transmission.

CDFA's current response is based on the understanding that influenza viruses change and evolve. The State has invested in a specially trained veterinary medical outbreak response team to protect California agriculture from continued spread of Bird Flu. CDFA is also managing multiple USDA-funded research projects to better understand the virus, so we can adjust our strategies to combat the evolving Bird Flu virus. For the latest updates on the new genotype D1.1 in dairy cattle, visit the [USDA APHIS website](#).

California's supply of milk and dairy foods is safe and has not been impacted by these events. Healthy cows have been cleared to continue shipping milk for pasteurization. Pasteurization of milk is fully effective at inactivating the virus so there is no cause for concern for consumers from pasteurized milk or dairy products. Pasteurized milk and dairy items, as well as properly handled meat and eggs, continue to be safe to consume.

Clinical signs of H5N1 livestock include decreased feed consumption with a simultaneous decrease in rumination and rumen motility, respiratory signs including clear nasal discharge, acute drop in milk production (severely affected cattle may have thicker, concentrated, colostrum-like milk or produce no milk at all), abnormal tacky or loose feces, lethargy, dehydration, and fever. Infected cattle may be subclinical (asymptomatic) or clinical (symptomatic) with the virus predominantly found in milk

and mammary tissue regardless of clinical signs.

>> *Livestock and poultry owners that have experienced any unusual/suspicious illness or deaths should call our H5N1 Bird Flu hotline at: 1-866-922-2473*

Humans

For the most up to date data on bird flu cases in California, please visit [CDPH's Current Bird Flu Situation dashboard](#). While the risk to the general public remains low, additional human cases of bird flu are expected to be identified and confirmed in California. CDPH recommends that personal protective equipment (PPE), such as eye protection (face shields or safety goggles), respirators (N95 masks), and gloves be worn by anyone working with animals or materials that are infected or potentially infected with the bird flu virus. Wearing PPE helps prevent infection. Please see CDPH's [Worker Protection from Bird Flu](#) for full PPE guidance. For the latest updates from CDPH, visit their [Bird Flu website](#). If you have any questions, comments or concerns, you can [submit an inquiry directly to CDPH](#).

If anyone suspects that they are infected with the Bird Flu virus, please contact your local public health department for further direction and testing. Not all medical care facilities are equipped or have testing available.

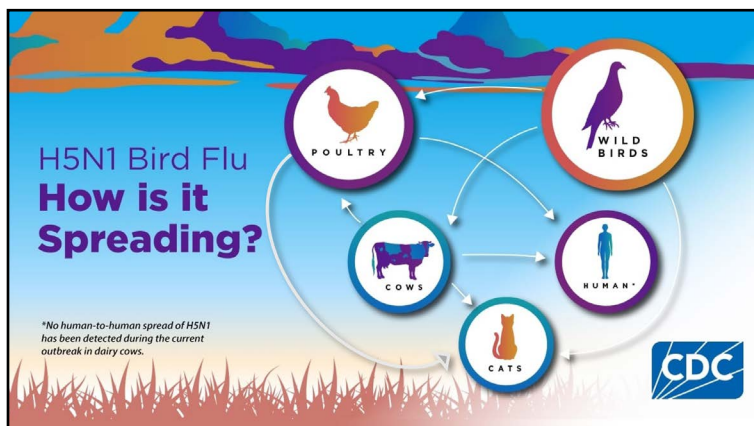
Other Animals

Since the beginning of the outbreak there have been cases of bird flu found in other mammals such as foxes, seals, raccoons, cats, etc. Bird flu cases in mammals since the beginning of the outbreak in 2022 are listed here: [HPAI Detections in Mammals](#).

>> *Please report any unusual or suspicious dead wild birds to the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife Mortality Report website](#). If you have questions about wildlife rehabilitation, please contact the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Health Lab](#) directly.*

Stay Informed

- For the latest updates of HPAI in California domestic poultry, visit our website at: bit.ly/CalAvianflu.
- For the latest updates of H5N1 in California domestic livestock, visit our website at: bit.ly/cdfaLivestockHPAI.
- For public inquiries regarding H5N1 Bird Flu in California, please send an e-mail to cdfa.HPAIinfo@cdfa.ca.gov or call 916-217-7517. For media inquiries, please call 916-654-0462 or send an e-mail to OfficeOfPublicAffairs@cdfa.ca.gov.



H5N1 Bird Flu in Dairies – Disease Management Update

By: Nicki Humphrey, DVM

H5N1 Bird Flu detections continue to be identified across the nation in many different species, including dairy cattle. In February 2025, CDFA shifted its response strategy from localized surveillance zones to a regional approach. The goals of this new strategy are to reduce the viral load in Central Valley dairies and work towards recovery, limit the spread of virus in Southern California dairies, and prevent introduction into dairies along the North Coast and in Northern California. This strategy resulted in the release of livestock market quarantines in the Central Valley while maintaining infected dairy quarantines. Dairies under quarantine are required to obtain permits to move lactating dairy cows and springers off infected premises. These classes of dairy cattle cannot go from an infected premises to a livestock market. [Learn more](#) information about the H5N1 Regional Strategy.

Movement restrictions in the form of a Federal Order from USDA APHIS continue to be enforced in response to continued detections in dairy cattle that require testing of dairy cattle for H5N1 within seven days of interstate movement in addition to any state-specific entry requirements. The primary focus of the Federal Order has been lactating dairy cattle moving interstate as part of a risk-based approach by APHIS to mitigate spread although some states have been imposing additional requirements on other classes of cattle coming from California. Producers and their veterinarians are advised to check with the state of destination when sending dairy cattle interstate.

On December 6, 2024, USDA announced a new Federal Order requiring national milk testing. The order requires raw milk samples be shared upon request,



positive herds to provide epidemiology information, and private laboratories and state veterinarians report positive results to USDA that come from tests done on raw milk as part of the National Milk Testing Strategy. As of April 9, 2025, only two states have not completed surveillance plans to enter the National Milk Testing Strategy. The previously issued Federal Order remains in place at this time.

H5N1 Bird Flu in California Cats

By: Laura Bradley, DVM

Avian influenza viruses can infect all bird species. Some subtypes, particularly H5 and H7, can devastate poultry flocks and are referred to as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). California confirmed its first case of HPAI, H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, in poultry on August 11, 2022. The current strain of H5N1 Bird Flu can infect not only birds but several mammalian species including humans. In August 2024, this virus was detected in California dairies in the Central Valley. Since then, the virus has been confirmed in over 750 California dairies with a high viral load found in unpasteurized dairy cow milk. According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), “USDA

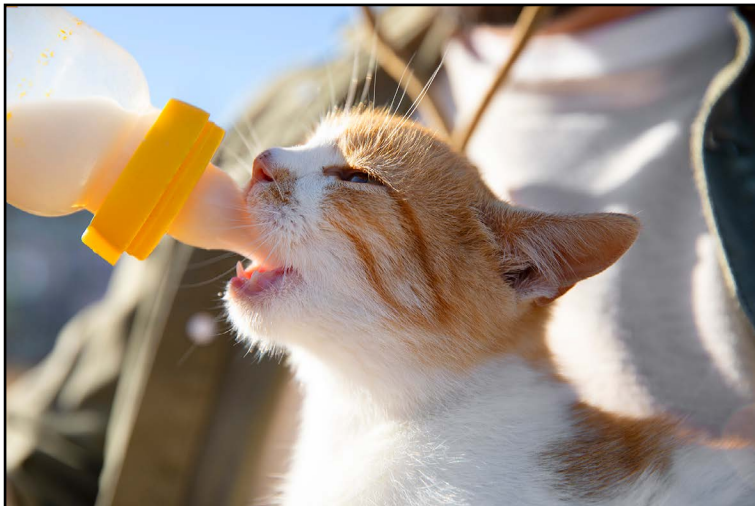
APHIS has reported H5N1 infection in ... domestic cats after contact with infected birds or consumption of contaminated milk.”

On December 12, 2024, Bird Flu was reported in cats in California for the first time. Two southern California pet cats died after consuming contaminated retail raw milk. From December 2024 to February 2025, there have been 17 confirmed cases of H5N1 Bird Flu cases in cats, with an additional 34 suspected cases. On February 21, 2025, CDPH notified practicing veterinarians that Influenza A in cats is mandated [reportable to local public health offices](#). The California Avian Health Education Network (CAHEN) program within CDFA has collaborated with CDPH veterinarians to provide recommendations to small animal practices, animal shelters, and other animal care facilities on H5N1 in wild birds, domesticated birds, and cats.

Guidance for Veterinarians

Bird Flu infections in cats often result in severe and fatal neurologic and/or respiratory disease. Based on owner reported histories, it is suspected that many cats are becoming infected through consumption of unpasteurized dairy products, raw pet foods, or contact with wild birds. For cats with a history of

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these risk factors, veterinarians should look for clinical signs compatible with Bird Flu including lethargy, inappetence, fever, acute onset respiratory illness, and neurologic illness (ex. ataxia, paralysis, seizures, and cortical blindness/chorioretinitis). Neurologic signs in cats infected with Bird Flu are acute and rapidly progressive mimicking animals infected with rabies, FIP, and other encephalitides. [Testing and management guidelines for veterinarians](#) and [CDPH's letter to veterinarians](#) can be found on their website.

Guidance for Cat Owners

According to the California Department of Public Health ([CDPH](#)) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)), Bird Flu is not considered a significant public health threat. The risk of transmission from infected animals to humans is considered low, but those who have direct and frequent contact with infected animals are at a higher risk. There are currently no cases of cat-to-human or human-to-human transmission of Bird Flu. Pet owners can significantly reduce the risk of exposure to Bird Flu in their pets with the following:

- Do not feed pets unpasteurized dairy products, raw meat (including human grade), or raw pet food diets.
- Keep pet cats indoors, especially when there are active infections of Bird Flu in California. Keep cats away from livestock, poultry, and wild animals.

Pet owners who suspect Bird Flu in their pets should contact their veterinarian especially, **before arriving** at a veterinary clinic or other animal care facility to give the animal care team time to prepare for the visit. Sick cats should have limited contact with people who have higher health risks including children under five years of age, adults over 65, pregnant women, and the immunocompromised. Household members should be monitored for signs of influenza-like symptoms for 10 days after their last contact with the sick cat. Household members should consult with their health care provider if they have any questions

or concerns about their health.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to keep California agriculture and food supply safe. Follow us on Facebook at California Avian Health Education Network and Instagram @cahensocal for more information on poultry health and disease mitigation tips.

Changes to USDA Payment of Indemnity and Compensation for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

By: Kavishthi Kokaram, DVM, DACVPM, Supervising Veterinarian

Poultry producers affected by the current outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) have begun to see changes in the manner in which the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) have been managing indemnity payments following the publishing of an interim rule in the federal register ([9 CFR Part 53](#)). As of December 31, 2024; USDA, APHIS has implemented new biosecurity audit requirements for commercial poultry premises as a condition for receiving indemnity payments related to HPAI. Producers affected by HPAI (infected premises and those within control areas) will be required to pass a biosecurity audit as part of this Biosecurity Compliance Audit Program (BCAP) prior to placing birds onto their premises. These measures are being implemented by USDA, APHIS to incentivize producers to continue implementation of adequate biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction and spread of HPAI.

One of the hallmarks of the current outbreak since 2022 has been that there has been minimal lateral spread of the wild-type (D 1.1) HPAI virus between premises. However data from the current outbreak has highlighted the significantly elevated

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disease risk faced by premises within the various control areas especially in light of the current HPAI strain circulating in dairy farms (B 3.13). USDA, APHIS has identified that the current paper-based audit process does not always illustrate how well the premises are practicing biosecurity to prevent HPAI infection or reintroduction necessitating this change in approach and a renewed emphasis on the importance of and validation of biosecurity on farm in order to mitigate as much of the associated risks as possible.



The two classes of premises that fall under this interim rule are infected premises identified after December 31, 2024 and those premises that lie within the buffer zone of the control area of infected premises identified after this date. To be eligible for indemnity payments, commercial poultry producers will be required to pass a BCAP biosecurity audit prior to moving poultry onto their property. A BCAP biosecurity audit involves an evaluation of a premises' biosecurity plan and its implementation. The audit assesses whether the premises meets the minimum requirements outlined in the APHIS Biosecurity Audit Tool, which is based on the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) biosecurity criteria. It includes a review of the biosecurity plan itself and visual verification of perimeter areas, personnel line-of-separation procedures, and rodent/wildlife mitigation strategies. Premises that place birds onto their premises without a passing the required BCAP audit will forfeit eligibility for indemnity for their flocks should they become infected at some future point.

A copy of the current interim rule may be found on the [Federal Register: Payment of Indemnity and Compensation for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza](#). Further information on the USDA, APHIS BCAP rule and recommendations for HPAI risk mitigation for producers may be found on the [CDFA Avian Influenza webpage](#).

Seasonal Movement Permits for Beef Cattle and Horses – Application Period Open for 2025

By: Kristen Cox, Environmental Scientist

Springtime coincides with the beginning of pasture movements out of state for many California cattle ranchers. If you, or your clients (if you are a veterinarian), own a beef breeding herd that commutes between California and either Nevada, Oregon, or Idaho throughout the year to graze, your herd may be eligible to move on a Pasture-to-Pasture (P2P) Permit. These permits may exempt your cattle from traditional interstate movement and health requirements, such as Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs), entry permits, and/or testing; however, official identification is still required. Brucellosis vaccination may also still be required for female beef cattle depending on the destination/participating state despite California recently changing its vaccination requirements.

Additionally, the Animal Health Branch (AHB) offers a Working Horse Permit (WHP) to horse owners for moving their horses across state lines between California and Nevada or Idaho strictly to assist with livestock husbandry or other ranch-related activities. Many times, these permits are used in conjunction with P2P Permits. If approved, a WHP exempts horses from needing CVIs over the course of the calendar year in which the permit is valid as long as they have a current negative Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) test (also known as a Coggins test).

Permits and WHPs should be submitted at least 30 days prior to the anticipated movement date and an approved copy of the permit must travel with the animals whenever transported across state lines. Keep in mind that with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) being present in California this year, certain herds/ranches may not qualify and/or additional restrictions may be put in place to minimize spread of the disease.

For more information about P2P Permits or WHPs, please contact the Permit Desk at (916) 900-5052 or evet@cdfa.ca.gov. If interested in applying, both the WHP and P2P Permit applications are available for download on [AHB's website](#).



CDFA's Electronic Identification (EID) Tag Program for Cattle and Bison

By: Kristen Cox, Environmental Scientist

With the new federal Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) rule now in effect as of November 5, 2024, all official identification (ID) applied to cattle and bison must be both visually and electronically readable. To support our California-based producers, veterinarians, and approved tagging sites during this transition, CDFA AHB is continuing to offer EID tags at no-cost for use in cattle and bison as supplies last. EID tags may also be purchased directly from [USDA-approved tag manufacturers](#).

"How do I obtain EID tags from CDFA?"

- First, you will need to have a Premises Identification Number (PIN), which is a unique, permanent alphanumeric number assigned to a geographic location (premises) where livestock are managed. Without a PIN, tags cannot be obtained from CDFA or a tag manufacturer.
 - To apply for a PIN, complete [AHB Form 76-196-W \(Location Number Request\)](#) and submit to your local [AHB district office](#) or the contact on the application.
- Once you have a PIN, you can submit an EID Tag Request Form to your [AHB district office](#).
 - [Producer application](#) (Form 76-226)
 - [Veterinarian application](#) (Form 76-227)
 - [Approved tagging site application](#) (Form 228)

"I received EID tags; now what?"

- Anyone receiving or applying official ID to livestock in California are required to maintain appropriate records for a minimum of five years.
- To have the most success with applying your EIDs, it is recommended to use an applicator from the same manufacturer. To purchase a tag applicator, reach out to the tag manufacturer directly.

"As a California veterinarian, how do I report my tag usage to CDFA?"

- Applied and/or distributed EID tag numbers must be submitted electronically to your local AHB district office.
 - If EID tags are applied or read at the time of brucellosis vaccination, whether the tags are orange or white, those tag numbers must be emailed to CDFA within 14 days of vaccination along with a copy of the brucellosis vaccination report. A template is available for use to assist with this process: [Brucellosis Vaccination EID Submission Template](#)

- If white EID tags are applied to cattle or distributed to a cattle producer, those tag numbers must be recorded on [Form 76-210 \(EID Tag Application and Distribution Report\)](#) and that reporting form emailed monthly, at minimum, to CDFA, even if no tags were applied or distributed. This process is similar to what was previously required when receiving silverbrite tags.

AHB District Office Contacts for Application Submission and Reporting

- Redding: evet@cdfa.ca.gov (530) 225-2140
- Modesto: cdfa.ahfss_ahb_modestodata@cdfa.ca.gov (209) 491-9350
- Tulare: cdfa.tularedata@cdfa.ca.gov (559) 685-3500
- Ontario: evet@cdfa.ca.gov (909) 947-5932



Commonly Asked EID Tag and ADT Rule Change Questions

"What constitutes an official EID tag?"

- Currently, the only acceptable form of EID is a Radio Frequency ID (RFID), also known as an "840" tag. RFID tags starting with a "900" series number do not meet federal requirements and have not qualified as official ID since March 2014.

"What animals does this new rule change apply to, specifically relating to using EID tags as official ID?"

- The portion of the ADT Rule that came into effect on November 5, 2024, discussing the switch to visually and electronically readable official tags, only impacts cattle and bison. No other species are required to use EIDs, although they are available for use as official ID.

"Are all cattle and bison required to have EIDs in place?"

- No. The classes of cattle and bison requiring official ID has not changed. The only change pertains to the type of tag that can be applied and utilized as official ID.

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- Within California, the following require official ID:
 - All dairy breed cattle regardless of age, sex, or use
 - Beef breed female cattle moving to slaughter
 - All cattle and bison of any age used for rodeo, exhibition, or recreational events
 - Cattle and bison undergoing official disease testing or vaccination, such as with brucellosis, tuberculosis, or trichomonosis
- Interstate movement requirements are determined by the destination state and may vary from the above in-state requirements for California.

“I still have silverbrite (metal) tags. What do I do with these tags?”

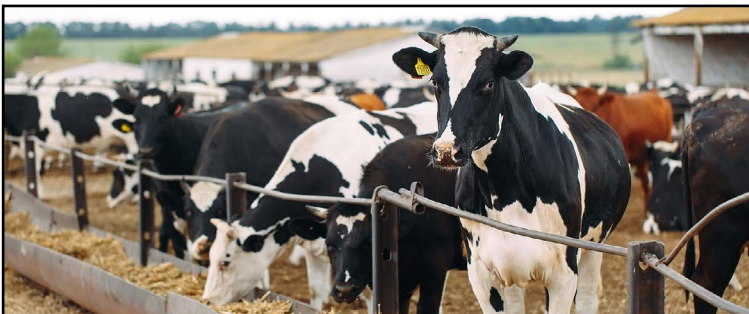
- If you are still in possession of visual only official ID tags, such as silverbrites, they can no longer be applied to cattle and bison as of November 5, 2024. Please return them to your local AHB district office so they can be recycled.

“If my cattle already have orange brucellosis vaccination tags in place, do they need to be replaced or removed?”

- No. Any visual only tag, such as a brucellosis vaccination tag or silverbrite tag, that was already in place prior to November 5, 2024, will qualify as official ID for the lifetime of that animal. You may elect to also apply an EID tag, but it is not required.
- Remember that removing official ID from an animal is illegal.

“As a veterinarian, what tags do I use when brucellosis vaccinating heifers?”

- Any color “840” RFID tag may be applied in the heifer’s left ear at the time of vaccination if official ID is not currently in place. The tag is not required to be orange, per federal regulations, although orange RFID tags are available for use.



USDA Wildlife Services’ Eggs-tra Efforts

By: Danny Dickason, DVM, MCM, Wildlife Interface and Small Ruminant Programs

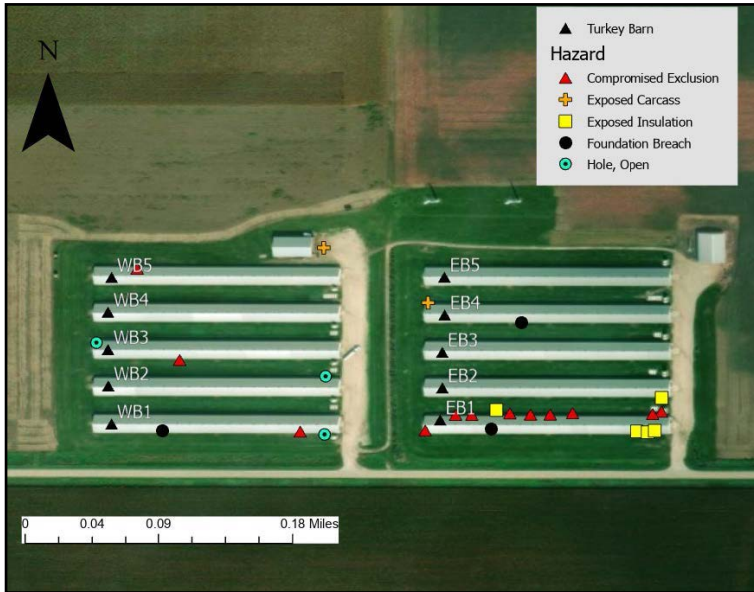
On February 26, 2025, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a press release outlining their ongoing efforts to combat avian flu and their strategy for reducing egg prices. California and the nation as a whole have been grappling with an outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI, “bird flu”) since February of 2022 that continues to the present time. Egg laying flocks infected with HPAI will experience mortalities between 90-100%, often within 48 hours, which has a significant effect on animal welfare, producer and worker mental and physical wellbeing, economics, the environment, and the price consumers pay for eggs and egg products. The press release outlines ongoing efforts by USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to combat the impacts of bird flu, such as providing indemnity to producers whose flocks have been depopulated, investigating the potential for an HPAI vaccine, and soliciting input from multiple stakeholders. Also highlighted is an additional strategy USDA plans to bring to egg producers in California: Wildlife Biosecurity Assessments (WBAs).

WBAs were initially a pilot project that showed considerable success in preventing HPAI outbreaks (gauged by only one of 150 premises receiving a WBA subsequently experiencing an outbreak). They consist of a general operational approach Wildlife Services California (WS-CA) uses for Wildlife Damage Management (WDM): when assistance requests are received from producers, tribes, or counties, WS staff can perform a site visit which results in technical advice and or operational assistance custom-tailored to the requesting facility in order to address wildlife damage management concerns. In this case, the wildlife damage concern is infection of a laying flock with HPAI.

Wildlife Services will conduct a thorough assessment of each area of a premises (perimeter buffer area, line of separation, farm, surrounding areas) while mapping and evaluating wildlife attractants, identifying breaches in the line of separation, observing behaviors and practices, and establishing wildlife monitoring and surveillance points. Formal assessments will be provided to farm managers and will include descriptions of potential biosecurity breaches, photographs of specific wildlife biosecurity concerns, and recommendations for correction or minimization of these specific biosecurity risks. USDA will share up to 75% of the costs to fix the highest risk biosecurity concerns identified by the assessments although costs to repair or modify infrastructure may need to be covered by the farm owner.

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Whereas typically WS-CA requests for WDM assistance can occur for a number of different reasons ranging from coyotes preying on sheep to European Starlings feasting on (and decimating) a field of freshly sprouted grains, these WBA efforts will be solely focused on preventing introduction of HPAI onto egg laying premises in California. Another difference from standard WDM practices, where parties reach out to WS-CA to request assistance, is that WS-CA will be reaching out to the egg industry and producers to initiate cooperation with these efforts. If you are an egg producer in California who is interested in preventing HPAI and would like a WBA performed at their facility, you can contact WS-CA at 916-979-2675.



WBA Report Example. Photo credit: USDA WS

Telehealth Medicine and Durations of Use: How Recent Changes in California Intersect with Federal Drug Rules for Antimicrobial Use

By: CDFA's Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship Team

Effective January 1, 2024, the California legislature expanded the methods for establishing a veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR) to include telehealth*, by way of synchronous audio-video communication. However, this expansion comes with additional considerations to ensure compliance with legal requirements, as well as upholding the same standard of care that is expected when seeing patients in-person.

[California Business and Professions Code section 4826.6](#)

(b) states that “A veterinarian possesses sufficient knowledge of the animal patient for purposes of paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) if the veterinarian has recently seen, or is personally acquainted

with, the care of the animal patient by doing any of the following:

- (1) Examining the animal patient in person.
- (2) Examining the animal patient by use of synchronous audio-video communication.
- (3) Making medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises on which the animal patient is kept.”

This modification came with additional restrictions regarding antimicrobial prescription durations and requirements to maintain and renew the VCPR.

Note, no controlled substances or xylazine can be prescribed without an in-person physical examination or medically appropriate and timely visits; this topic is out of the scope of the following discussion.

When is re-examination of the animal needed to extend treatment?

14 days: Prescriptions for antimicrobial drugs can be written only for 14 days, if the VCPR is established through synchronous audio-video communication, before needing to examine the animal in-person to extend treatment. [CA Bus. & Prof. Code § [4826.6.\(i\)\(5\)](#)]

6 months: A veterinarian who established the required veterinarian-client-patient relationship using synchronous audio-video communication shall not prescribe any drug to the animal patient for use for a period longer than six months from the date upon which the veterinarian examined the animal patient or prescribed the drug.

The veterinarian shall not issue another prescription to the animal patient for the same drug unless they have conducted another examination of the animal patient, either in person or using telehealth.

1 year: If the VCPR is established by examining the animal patient in person or by making medically appropriate and timely visits to the premises on which the animal patient is kept, at maximum



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a veterinarian can prescribe for the particular condition one year from the date that the veterinarian examined the animal patient in person or visited the premises and prescribed the drug.

Why is there an in-person requirement in federally regulated drug use?

Federal law ([21 CFR 530.3\(i\)](#)) does not recognize telehealth* as a valid method for establishing a new VCPR but does allow an existing VCPR to be maintained electronically. Federal and state VCPR and telehealth definitions may conflict in certain situations, such as when issuing veterinary feed directive drugs or prescribing extra-label drug use. In these situations, the veterinarian must follow the federal VCPR guidelines, as defined in [21 CFR 530.3\(j\)](#).

These uses – Veterinary Feed Directives (VFD) and extra-label prescribing – are authorized to veterinarians under the US Food and Drug Administration regulations. As such, they are subject to federal requirements when state level regulations do not meet or exceed federal definitions.

What are the limits for duration of use of Veterinary Feed Directives?

6 months: A VFD can be written for a maximum of six months, with the maximum duration of use following the approved label within the [Code of Federal Regulations](#). It cannot be written through a VCPR established by telehealth*, pursuant to federal law.

When considering the applicable laws for issuing medically important antimicrobial drugs, it is best to review applicable laws and assess where the regulatory authority lies. Should you have additional questions about use of medically important antimicrobial drugs in California, you may reach our program at cdfa_aus@cdfa.ca.gov.

**Throughout this document, the term telehealth is used as it may be more familiar to readers. In order to be compliant with California code, synchronous audio-video communication is required for establishing a telehealth VCPR.*

GOT BIRD PHOTOS?



TAKE PHOTOS OF YOUR BIRDS
AND SUBMIT THEM TO BE
CONSIDERED FOR THE 2026
AVIAN HEALTH CALENDAR



*IMPORTANT PHOTO GUIDELINES:
[HTTP://WWW.CDFA.CA.GOV/AHFSS/ANIMAL_HEALTH/PDFS/PHOTO-DISCLAIMER.PDF](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/ANIMAL_HEALTH/PDFS/PHOTO-DISCLAIMER.PDF)

SUBMIT BY: MAY 31, 2025

Foreign Animal Disease Investigations December 16, 2024 – March 15, 2025

By: Alireza Javidmehr, DVM, MPVM, PhD,
Emergency Preparedness and Response Section

It is crucial for national security to monitor foreign animal diseases (FADs) and their potential impacts on the food supply chain and international trade. Even though these diseases have either been eradicated or have not occurred in the United States, a widespread outbreak could result in serious consequences. This includes posing a public health risk if they can be transmitted to humans. Therefore, early detection and immediate action to control and eradicate FADs are essential. California is investing significant resources to protect the livestock industry against FAD outbreaks. You can learn about the critical activities when an FAD is detected in the state by viewing 13 infographics and three short video clips on the [CDFA Preparedness and Response webpage](#).

On August 30th, 2024, California’s first case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in dairy cows was detected,

triggering the activation of the unified incident command system. Since the first detection, the CDFCA Animal Health and Food Safety has been responding to the incident in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Veterinary Services (VS).

Between December 16, 2024 and March 15, 2025, California FAD diagnosticians investigated 74 FAD suspicious cases (Table 1). Out of the 66 investigations conducted on swine, 65 investigations were to rule out Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in pigs being shipped to slaughterhouses. The lesions observed in these cases were found to be caused by Senecavirus A (SVA). Although SVA is an endemic disease in the US, it triggers an investigation for FAD due to the similarity of lesions to FMD. Treating any animal diseases presenting similar signs to FADs as an FAD is essential until the condition can be ruled out.

All Emergency conditions listed in the [California reportable animal disease list](#) must be reported to the local animal health authorities within 24 hours. Contact information for the AHB district offices is listed on the last page of this newsletter and on the reportable disease list.

Table 1. Summary of FAD Investigations from December 16, 2024 to March 15, 2025

AHB Districts	Disease	Species	Sample Type	Number of Investigations	Destination Lab*
Modesto	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Senecavirus A (SVA)	Porcine	Swab	54	KSVDL
	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)	Avian	Swab	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
Ontario	Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV)	Equine	Swab, Serum	3	NVSL
	FMD, VSV, Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF)	Bovine	Swab, Serum, Blood	1	NVSL
Redding	HPAI	Avian	Swab	2	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis
	VSV	Ovine	Swab	1	NVSL
Tulare	FMD, SVA	Porcine	Swab	11	KSVDL
	African Swine Fever (ASF)	Porcine	Spleen, Tonsil	1	NVSL, CAHFS-Davis

*NVSL: National Veterinary Services Laboratory
CAHFS: California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory
KSVDL: Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Animal Health Branch Staff Biographies

Joshua Glenn

Staff Services Manager I, Administrative Manager

I graduated from Sac State in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in economics. Shortly thereafter I joined the California Department of Food and Agriculture in February of 2021 with Human Resources and became interested in program administration. I took a job working with John Suther in Livestock Identification as their Admin Manager in 2023 which gave me my first taste of how vital AFHSS is to the Livestock and Agriculture industries. Outside of work I have a wife, a 4-year-old (Boy) and a 5-month-old (Girl) who all keep me busy and lighthearted. We love to travel in and around the west coast; beaches, mountains, trees, and tall buildings are my son's favorite things, so we are always on the move.



Mixtly Vega

Agricultural Technician I, Modesto District

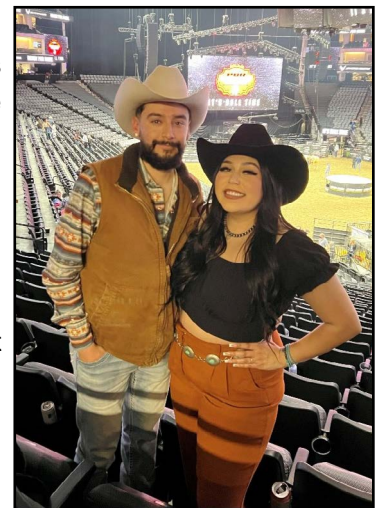
My name is Mixtly Vega, and I am an Agricultural Technician I with the CDFA's AHFSS/AHB Branch in the Modesto District. I was born and raised in Modesto, California. I developed a deep love for animals from a young age. This passion led me to pursue a degree in Animal Science at CSU Fresno. I graduated in May 2023.



During high school I was an active and proud member of FFA, where I participated in agricultural projects, took on leadership roles, and engaged in community service initiatives. Through my dedication and hard work, I earned my American FFA Degree in October 2021, an achievement that means a great deal to me, especially as someone who did not come from an agricultural background.

Recently I made the exciting decision to pursue my teaching credentials, as I hope to educate and inspire future generations in the agricultural field. When I'm not working with animals, I love spending my free time going to concerts, hiking, traveling, and making memories with friends and family.

Whether I'm caring for livestock or advocating for animal welfare, I am committed to making a positive impact in the field of animal science. My goal is to continue learning, growing, and contributing to the future of agriculture while inspiring the next generation of leaders in this industry.



Contact Information

■ Animal Health Branch

Dr. Amanda Murray, Branch Chief

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Permit Line: (916) 900-5052

Email: ahbfeedback@cdfa.ca.gov
Website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Index.html

■ District Offices

Veterinarian In Charge (VIC)

Redding

Dr. Steven Gallego
1819 Keystone Court
Redding, CA 96003
(530) 225-2140

Modesto

3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite F
Modesto, CA 95358
(209) 491-9350

Tulare

Acting VIC - Dr. Natalie Ward
18760 Road 112
Tulare, CA 93274
(559) 685-3500

Ontario

Dr. Alisha Olmstead
3800 Concours Street, Suite 150
Ontario, CA 91764
(909) 947-5932

■ Animal Health and Food Safety Services

Dr. Annette Jones, State Veterinarian and Director
(916) 900-5000

■ Other AHFSS Branches

Bureau of Livestock Identification
John Suther, Chief
(916) 900-5006

Milk and Dairy Food Safety
Dr. Stephen Beam, Chief
(916) 900-5008

Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety
Paula Batarseh, Chief
(916) 900-5004

Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship
Dr. Edie Marshall, Chief
(916) 576-0300

Animal Care
Dr. Elizabeth Cox, Chief
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■ United States Department of Agriculture

Dr. Donald Herriott
District Director, District 3

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Area Veterinarian in Charge, NM/CA/HI/PT
Field Operations – District 3

USDA, APHIS, VS, SPRS
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Animal Health Branch Programs

- [Animal Disease Traceability \(ADT\)](#)
- [Avian Program](#)
- [California Animal Response Emergency System \(CARES\)](#)
- [California Avian Health Education Network \(CAHEN\)](#)
- [Cattle Program](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness Response Section \(EPRS\)](#)
- [Equine Medication Monitoring Program \(EMMP\)](#)
- [Equine Program](#)
- [Foreign Animal Disease \(FAD\) Program](#)
- [Secure Food Supply \(SFS\) Program](#)
- [Small Ruminant Program](#)
- [Swine Program](#)
- [Wildlife Interface Program](#)

Mission Statement

The Animal Health Branch is the State's organized, professional veterinary medical unit that protects livestock populations, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases, disasters that impact animals, and other health or agricultural problems. The Branch addresses diseases and other problems that cannot be successfully controlled on an individual animal or herd basis but require state-wide coordinated resources. Implementing programs that protect California's livestock industries and consumers, ensures the availability, affordability, and wholesomeness of food.