Emerging Disease in Dairy Cattle

April 5, 2024

On March 25, 2024, federal and state veterinary and public health agencies announced the detection of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in dairy cattle herds in Texas and Kansas. Subsequently, dairy herds in Idaho, Michigan, New Mexico and Ohio have been confirmed with the virus. These herds all exhibited a similar clinical syndrome (Bovine Associated Influenza A Syndrome (H5N1)), which has been classified as an emerging disease. Information regarding this syndrome is rapidly evolving. Please visit the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) webpage for the latest information on this disease complex [Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Detections in Livestock | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (usda.gov)].

The clinical signs associated with this syndrome include decreased milk production; reduced appetite; thickened, discolored milk; lethargy; fever; and/or dehydration. This syndrome is a Reportable Disease in Florida under Chapter 5C-20 Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). Any Florida cattle showing clinical signs consistent with this syndrome should be reported immediately to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) at: www.FDACS.gov/RAD.

Currently, Florida has no reported cases. FDACS recommends livestock owners and veterinarians implement stringent biosecurity practices on their premises. Per Chapter 5C-3, F.A.C., cattle from premises which are known or suspected to be infected or exposed to Bovine Associated Influenza A Syndrome are prohibited from import into Florida unless moving under permit issued by the Florida State Veterinarian’s Office. FDACS will not be permitting such movements at this time. FDACS recommends avoiding the movement of lactating dairy cattle until additional information is available.

For the latest information regarding the requirements for interstate movement of livestock, please check the website www.InterstateLivestock.com or contact the state animal health official in the state of destination [State Veterinarians (usaha.org)]. Interstate movement regulations are changing rapidly and should be verified prior to each movement.

Farm Biosecurity Resources are available at:

- The Secure Milk Supply Plan offers comprehensive dairy biosecurity practices.
- Biosecurity - National Dairy FARM Program
- Biosecurity for cattle operations | UMN Extension
- Biosecurity Practices for Dairy Operations (tamu.edu)
- Farm Biosecurity - CFSPH (iastate.edu)

Although one human case has been observed during this recent event, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers the risk to human health to be low. In addition, the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), consider the U.S. commercial milk supply to be safe because products are pasteurized before entering the market. The
FDA does continue to stress that milk and milk products should be pasteurized, and the consumption of raw milk has numerous health risks.

- CDC Information: [H5N1 Bird Flu: Current Situation Summary | Avian Influenza (Flu) (cdc.gov)]
- FDA Information: [Questions and Answers Regarding Milk Safety During Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Outbreaks | FDA]