



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

FEBRUARY 14, 2025 – GUIDANCE FOR COMPANION ANIMAL VETERINARIANS

Key Points

- One indoor-only, domestic cat in Washington County, Oregon died in December 2024 after consuming commercially prepared raw pet food. The cat was tested and confirmed to be infected with H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), genotype B3.13.
 - The affected cat consumed Northwest Naturals brand 2lb Feline Turkey Recipe raw & frozen pet food.
- One stray domestic cat in Washington County, Oregon died in January 2025 after exposure to wild waterfowl (ducks and geese). The cat was tested and confirmed to be infected with H5N1 HPAI, genotype D1.1.
- Two indoor-only, domestic cats in Multnomah County, Oregon died in February 2025 after consuming commercially prepared raw pet food. The cats were tested and confirmed to be infected with H5N1 HPAI, both genotype B3.13.
 - Both cats consumed Wild Coast Raw brand Boneless Free Range Chicken Formula raw pet food.
- Northwest Naturals of Portland, Oregon voluntarily recalled Northwest Naturals brand 2lb Feline Turkey Recipe raw & frozen pet food on December 24, 2024 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.
- The Washington State Department of Agriculture issued a public health alert February 14, 2025 about Wild Coast Raw brand Boneless Free Range Chicken formula frozen raw pet food after it tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus
 - The affected product is packaged in round, white plastic containers, with a predominantly green label with lots 22660 and 22664 and best by date 12/2025 printed on stickers on the lids. The product was sold through distributors in WA, OR, ID, MT, and UT.
- 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

While cats have been known to be susceptible to this strain of HPAI since 2022, an increasing number of H5N1-infected domestic cats and big cats have been identified recently in several states.

On December 24, 2024, the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) 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. This cat was an indoor-only cat who’s only known exposure was a commercial raw-food diet. The food implicated in this infection was voluntarily recalled by the manufacturer.

On January 24, 2025, ODA announced the detection of H5N1 HPAI in a domestic cat in Washington County, Oregon. This was an outdoor cat with exposure to wild waterfowl (ducks and geese).

On February 14, 2025, ODA announced the detection of H5N1 HPAI in two domestic cats in Multnomah County, Oregon and WSDA issued a public health alert regarding raw pet food that is believed to have been the source of the infections. Both cats were indoor-only and the only known exposure was a commercial raw-food diet.

These cases highlight the evolving nature of this virus, as well as the zoonotic risks that are inherent to veterinary medicine. To see all of the aforementioned announcements in full, visit the ODA Avian Influenza page and scroll down to HPAI Announcements.

Presenting clinical signs common to all four feline cases:

- Lethargy
- Hyporexia/anorexia
- Signs are refractory to treatment

Other clinical signs seen:

- Pyrexia or hypothermia
- Progression of illness to pneumonia
- Progression of illness to neurologic abnormalities (ataxia, opisthotonus, head pressing, obtunded)
- Upper respiratory infection
- Elevation of nictitating membrane

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 ODA. 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. Oregon Department of Agriculture staff will help coordinate testing if appropriate – testing for the virus is available at no charge to veterinarians or owners.

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 pet food recalls 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
 - Wild Coast Raw Pet Food Recall Announcement
- **Identify potential cases of HPAI in pets.** Consider HPAI in patients that:
 - Spend time outside without supervision, have had exposure to/ingested raw milk, wild birds, sick poultry, raw meat, or raw meat products, and

- Are exhibiting neurologic signs (including seizures, nystagmus, or blindness) or other symptoms of HPAI (fever, lethargy, anorexia/hyporexia, 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, request that the owners record 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 should 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. [See CDC resources linked below.]
- **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 503-986-4711 immediately (before initiating diagnostic testing), while the patient is still in your clinic.
 - **For veterinary hospitals that see a lot of urgent care and emergency cases:** ODA will provide sampling and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to have in stock at your hospital. Kits may be requested online at <https://oda.fyi/HPAIKitRequest>. Cases identified for testing still need to be reported to ODA for laboratory submission (see above).
 - **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 may contact 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.