



## **Implementing a Mandatory Milk Testing Program in Pennsylvania** **Dairy Cattle: FAQ's**

### **Why should the dairy industry be concerned about influenza A?**

Influenza A, including highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), has been detected in dairy cattle in several other states. While the disease is not usually fatal in dairy cattle, it does have significant impact to affected farms, animals, and industries. Dairy cattle that have tested positive for the virus have demonstrated significant decrease in milk production and some have become seriously ill. The virus can put substantial burden on farm operations and cause significant losses.

Pennsylvania is home to many multi-species farms that have both poultry and dairy operations. These farms are highly susceptible to Influenza A because the virus can spread easily between animals and farms, particularly if biosecurity practices are not followed consistently. Additionally, an outbreak on one farm puts the entire industry at risk, especially for farms that share business relationships and resources.

### **How does the influenza A virus that is impacting dairy cattle spread?**

The influenza A virus was introduced initially into a dairy herd in the Southwestern US by infected wild birds. Since then, all transmission of the virus in dairy cattle has been from cow-to-cow spread, due in part to the movement of lactating dairy cows, contaminated equipment, and people between farms not adhering to or implementing biosecurity practices. Trucks, farm equipment, clothing, footwear, tools, and people can all transport the virus. This means robust biosecurity protocols must be followed.

A biosecurity plan should include wearing a designated pair of boots when working around animals, using a footbath with disinfectant after cleaning boots, cleaning equipment properly, and spraying disinfectant on vehicle and trailer tires before returning to the farm. The Center for Dairy Excellence (CDE) is offering assistance to all dairy producers for development of biosecurity plans.

### **Why is PDA implementing mandatory milk testing?**

Pennsylvania continues to monitor the rapid acceleration of cases of HPAI in dairy cattle across the United States. PDA is implementing mandatory milk testing at no cost, beginning at the processor level, to determine if Influenza A/HPAI is circulating in lactating dairy cattle throughout PA. Given the virus' ability to be transmitted between dairy cattle and poultry, PDA is being proactive to safeguard both industries from potentially devastating losses by providing no-cost testing.

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PDA and industry have seen the impact of HPAI in other states that had not established proactive testing protocols, where economic losses, rapid spread, and mortality of animals later triggered testing protocols but could not undo the significant damage already caused by the virus left undetected.

### **What are the requirements for the no-cost mandatory testing?**

- Any milk processor in Pennsylvania that is purchasing or receiving bulk raw milk directly from a Pennsylvania dairy farm or milk cooperative, and any individual Pennsylvania dairy farm or milk cooperative that is delivering bulk raw milk from a Pennsylvania dairy farm to an out-of-state milk processor, shall begin collecting and submitting samples of raw milk taken from each compartment of each milk tanker to the Department for testing.
- For milk purchased or received directly from a Pennsylvania dairy farm or milk cooperative by a milk processing plant in Pennsylvania, samples must be collected at the milk processing plant by an industry milk sampler.
- For milk being delivered to an out of state processing plant by an individual Pennsylvania dairy farmer or a milk cooperative handling or marketing milk on behalf of individual dairy farmers, the sample must be collected by a bulk milk hauler/sampler.
- Samples must be collected on a schedule and at a frequency that ensures that at least one sample of milk from every pickup route is collected at least once monthly.
- Collection of initial samples may be staggered so that samples from each pickup route are collected within the first month. A staggered schedule of sample collection should be maintained so that approximately the same number of samples are collected and submitted each day during each month period.
- All samples collected must be submitted in sample tubes provided by the Department within 48 hours of collection as directed by the Quarantine Order.
- Samples shall be accompanied by a PADLS submission form that indicates:
  - the number of farms contributing to each sample,
  - the USDA-issued premises ID of the processing plant,
  - number of samples included in the submission,
  - date of collection for each sample and
  - the name of the sampler for each sample.
  - Multiple samples may be included on a single submission form.
- If Avian Influenza is detected in a milk tanker sample, the processor must provide the Department access to the identification of all Pennsylvania dairy farms included in that tanker within 12 hours from the request.



- The Department will require testing of milk samples from each dairy farm identified in the event of a positive sample.

### **What happens if a positive test result is reported?**

If influenza A is identified on a dairy farm through testing, the Department will establish and post an Order of Special Quarantine at that farm, identify the farm as an infected premise, and establish an Infected Zone of three kilometers surrounding that farm.

Although the farm will be under an Order of Special Quarantine, the producer will be allowed to ship milk with a permit from PDA, while meeting biosecurity standards. PDA will work with the producer to maintain continuity of business while reducing the risk of spreading the influenza A virus to any other farms.

### **What happens to the dairy farms that fall within the 3 km Infected Zone?**

All lactating dairy herds located within the Infected Zone will be required to submit representative herd milk samples (either from their bulk tank(s) or an in-line sampler) for the purpose of surveillance. Testing and sampling on each premises within the Infected Zone will continue at a frequency and duration based upon epidemiological analyses until the Infected Zone is closed. Additionally, each herd premises must have a USDA-issued federal premises identification number registered with the Department.

Milk samples shall be collected at the dairy farm and may be submitted by any of the following:

- A weigher/sampler which may include a milk tanker driver, certified industry inspector, approved inspector, or approved sampler to take samples of producers' milk for analysis.
- Federal or State officials.
- Accredited Veterinarians.

### **Where should milk samples be sent for testing?**

Samples must be submitted within 48 hours of collection in tubes provided by the Department. If hand delivering, samples must be delivered to the nearest Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System lab. If mailing, samples must be submitted to: The Animal Diagnostic Laboratory, 131 Pastureview Rd. University Park, PA 16802. To find the nearest PADLS lab to you, please visit [www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov)



### **What if I don't have, or don't know, my USDA issued Premises ID Number?**

If you do not have a USDA issued premise ID number, you can enroll by contacting the Bureau of Animal Health at 717-772-2852 or using the [Premises Registration Form](#) available on the Bureau's website.

If you have a number but don't know it, you can find that information by contacting the Bureau of Animal Health at 717-772-2852 or by emailing [RA-premise-Id@pa.gov](mailto:RA-premise-Id@pa.gov)

### **How long will mandatory testing be required?**

We hope that this testing lasts only a short amount of time and never results in a positive result, but this is an emerging disease in dairy cattle with many unknowns. The program will continue as long as it remains necessary. Testing will help PDA, industry, and animal health stakeholders further understand and control the spread of the disease.

### **What does mandatory and voluntary testing cost?**

There is no cost to farmers, processors, or consumers for the testing. All supplies for participation will be provided by either PDA or USDA.

### **How will positive test results be confirmed?**

Testing used for influenza A in approved labs is highly accurate and specific. Positive tests will be confirmed at the national veterinary service laboratory (NVSL) and through additional investigation. In the unlikely event of a false positive test, these follow up check points will quickly determine the true status quickly and efficiently.

### **I am a dairy producer—what signs should I watch for in my dairy herd?**

Clinical signs in dairy cattle include a decrease in feed consumption, with a simultaneous decrease in rumination and rumen motility; respiratory signs including clear nasal discharge; and subsequent acute drop in milk production. Additional clinical signs may include abnormal tacky or loose feces, lethargy, dehydration, and fever. Severely affected cattle may have thicker, concentrated, colostrum-like milk or produce no milk at all.

Any dairy cow showing clinical illness should be immediately separated from the rest of the herd and your veterinarian and PDA notified immediately. Milk from dairy cattle that are sick or producing abnormal milk should not enter the food supply chain and these animals should be milked separately from the rest of the herd. There are several options for how to treat that milk from infected cattle, such as on-farm pasteurization. However, each case will need to be handled individually and staff from the Bureau of Animal Health will work with dairy producers to determine protocols that will work for their individual circumstances.



### **I want to be proactive at a farm-level and test my own herd. What can I do?**

You can enroll through PDA's Voluntary Herd Monitoring program. This program will provide critical data on the health status of dairy cattle in Pennsylvania to ensure that our state remains free of HPAI. Enrolled farms will benefit by no longer being required to individually test cattle prior to interstate movement. Testing will be performed at no cost to producers, and PDA or USDA will provide necessary sampling supplies upon enrollment. For more information, please visit the PADLS website at [www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov](http://www.padls.agriculture.pa.gov)

### **What if I have poultry or other species on my farm?**

The influenza A virus is easily spread to and deadly to poultry. It has also been confirmed in other livestock such as swine and alpacas. Strict biosecurity remains the most effective means of preventing the spread of influenza A from one farm to another. If you have more than one species of animals on your premises, treat these areas as separate premises and implement best biosecurity practices between them.

The Center for Poultry and Livestock provides support for poultry producers to develop biosecurity plans. Information is available at [www.poultryandlivestockexcellence.org](http://www.poultryandlivestockexcellence.org) or 717-651-5920. Additional information is also available through USDA at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)

### **What resources are available if influenza A is detected on a dairy farm?**

The USDA has a number of resources available for producers who have been impacted by an influenza A detection on their farm. That includes helping producers pay for heat treatment of milk, the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE), and financial assistance for dairy farmers who have seen a loss of production. More information about USDA resources can be found at [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)

### **Where can I find current and reliable information on HPAI and influenza A?**

Information regarding HPAI and influenza A can be found on the USDA website at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock>



**Does Pennsylvania have the testing capacity to handle this new mandatory testing?**

Yes. The PADLS laboratories are equipped to handle the increased testing that will result from mandatory and voluntary testing.

**Is pasteurized milk safe to consume?**

Yes. The FDA has demonstrated that pasteurization kills the influenza A virus, so pasteurized milk or other dairy products remain safe to consume. The FDA recommends consuming pasteurized milk and dairy products.

**I have more questions. Where can I get answers?**

- The official Quarantine Order can be found online at [agriculture.pa.gov](http://agriculture.pa.gov) or by contacting the Bureau of Animal Health at 717-772-2852.
- Questions regarding this Quarantine Order may be directed to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Health, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110 or by telephone at 717-772-2852, or email at [RA-ahds@pa.gov](mailto:RA-ahds@pa.gov).
- Questions and resources to prepare a Biosecurity Plan are available through the Center for Dairy Excellence at [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org) ([Request an Everyday Biosecurity Kit | Center for Dairy Excellence](#)) or 717.346.0849.
- Questions about biosecurity plans can be addressed to the Department at [RA-AGBIOPLANS@pa.gov](mailto:RA-AGBIOPLANS@pa.gov) or 717.585.8752.
- To secure your official federal premises identification, visit [Premises Registration Form - Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture](#) or contact the Department at [RA-PREMISE-ID@pa.gov](mailto:RA-PREMISE-ID@pa.gov) or 717-783-3241.