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425 E. Broad St.
Westfield, NJ 07090

Westfield Regional Health Department

Avian Influenza A (H5N1)

In Cats



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Since the U.S. outbreak of avian influenza A (H5N1) in dairy cattle started in March 2024, numerous cats have been reported to have contracted the virus, including barn and feral cats, indoor cats, and big cats in zoos and the wild (e.g., mountain lions, tigers, leopards, and bobcats).

Cats were already known to be vulnerable to the H5N1 virus, with several feline cases previously connected to exposure from poultry or wild birds before the cattle outbreak began.

Signs

+ Symptoms

- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Fever
- Respiratory signs, including rapid or difficulty breathing
- Sneezing or coughing



Infection

Prevention

- Refrain from feeding cats any dairy products or colostrum that have not first been pasteurized or thoroughly cooked.
- Thoroughly cook meat before feeding, and avoid feeding raw meat-based treats or diets.
- Keep cats indoors to prevent exposure to birds and other wildlife.
- Avoid contact with sick or dead birds and other wildlife yourself.
- Keep cats away from livestock, poultry, and their environments, especially in areas with known H5N1 outbreaks.
- Thoroughly wash your hands after handling your cat and after any encounters with poultry, livestock, or wild birds and other animals.
- Change your clothes and shoes, and thoroughly wash any exposed skin, after interacting with sick or dead animals that may harbor the H5N1 virus, and before interacting with your cat.
- Immediately contact your veterinarian if you notice signs of H5N1 or think your cat might have been exposed to the virus.

For more information: [American Veterinary Medical Association](#)