USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Shares Update on H5N1 Detection in Oregon Swine, Bovine Vaccine Candidate Progression

Print

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6, 2024 - Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is sharing key updates regarding the detection of HPAI H5N1 in a backyard farm operation in Crook County, Ore., as well as additional information about the agency’s proactive efforts to protect livestock, farms and communities from avian influenza.

On Wed., Oct. 30, USDA APHIS announced that H5N1 avian influenza was detected in one of the pigs at this backyard farm, that two pigs tested negative, and tests were pending for two additional pigs. The USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) has completed testing on the two remaining pigs and has confirmed that one tested positive and met the clinical case definition for HPAI H5N1. Sequencing from this positive sample, while incomplete due to the low level of the virus, indicates infection from the D1.2 genotype of H5N1.

Because the amount of virus from the infected pigs was very low, only partial genomic sequences could be extracted from one of the two samples and these sequences indicate infection with the D1.2 genotype of H5N1. APHIS and the Oregon Department of Agriculture had previously also shared that H5N1 had been detected in poultry on the same farm; the samples from the poultry were also found to have the D1.2 genotype.

Genomic sequencing of samples from migratory birds in the area showed very similar sequences, which increases the probability that the pigs and poultry on this farm became infected after coming into contact with infected migratory birds, not dairy cattle or other livestock.

This farm is a non-commercial operation, and the animals were not intended for the commercial food supply. There is no concern about the safety of the nation’s pork supply as a result of this finding.

Additionally, over the past week APHIS has approved field safety trials for two additional vaccine candidates for H5N1 in cattle, bringing the total number of candidates approved for field trials to four. USDA continues to support the rapid development and timely approval of an H5N1 vaccine for dairy cows, in addition to other species.

Last week, as part of USDA’s broader efforts to combat the spread of H5N1, APHIS announced plans to partner with State and animal health officials to enhance testing and monitoring for H5N1, building on measures taken by USDA since the beginning of the avian influenza outbreak. This strategy builds on measure taken by states, as well as national risk mitigation measures including the Federal Order requiring testing of lactating cattle prior to interstate movement, which was announced in April 2024. The state of Colorado’s bulk milk testing program has been highly successful, with no herds currently containing cattle infected with H5N1 and has helped inform the design of this new milk testing strategy.

In partnership with state veterinarians, USDA will implement a tiered strategy to collect milk samples to better assess where H5N1 is present, with the goal to better inform biosecurity and containment measures, as well as to inform state-led efforts to reduce risk to farm workers who may be in contact with animals infected with H5N1. USDA intends to begin implementation of this strategy within 30 days of the announcement. USDA will continue to work with state and private veterinarians on the final details of implementation, and will share guidance documents soon.

USDA continues to emphasize to farmers nationwide that biosecurity is the best weapon against the spread of H5N1, and farms should practice good biosecurity even if the virus has not been detected in their state or vicinity. Data collected over the past seven months has shown that H5N1 can be transmitted on equipment, people, or other items that move from farm to farm, including between dairies and poultry facilities. USDA's Federal Order to require testing before cattle movement between states has helped limit the spread of H5N1, but local and state efforts to enhance biosecurity measures remain just as important. USDA strongly encourages herd owners to participate in available producer support programs, which help to cover the cost such as biosecurity programming, PPE for employees, and veterinary care. Producers can find more information at aphis.usda.gov, or at your nearest USDA Farm Service Agency county office.

As USDA takes additional steps to protect the health of livestock, the Department will continue to work closely with its federal partners at CDC to protect the health of people and FDA to protect the safety of the food supply. These collective, collaborative efforts have helped protect farmworkers and farmers, the health and welfare of livestock animals, and reaffirmed the safety of the nation's food supply. The U.S. government remains committed to addressing this situation with urgency.

Learn more about USDA's response to HPAI in dairy cattle on the APHIS website.

#

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.