



Novel Avian Influenza

Recommendations for Evaluation of Suspect Cases of Novel Avian Influenza

1. Isolate the patient and follow the infection control recommendations below.
2. Initiate empiric antiviral treatment as soon as possible.
3. Notify the Arkansas Department of Health Zoonotic Section at 501-280-4136 during normal business hours (M-F 8:00am-4:30pm). Outside of normal business hours, call 1-800-651-3493.
4. Using personal protective equipment (PPE), collect respiratory specimens from the patient to test for novel influenza A viruses.
5. Consider testing for other potential causes of acute respiratory illness based on the local epidemiology of circulating respiratory viruses, including SARS-CoV-2.

Signs and Symptoms

- Uncomplicated upper respiratory tract signs and symptoms with or without fever, including influenza-like illness (fever $\geq 100^{\circ}\text{F}$ plus cough or sore throat)
- Fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) or feeling feverish
- Cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue
- Eye redness (or conjunctivitis)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting

Exposure History

Obtain an exposure history for all patients with signs and symptoms consistent with influenza as follows.

Within the past 10 days, has the patient experienced any of the following?

1. Contact with potentially infected sick or dead birds, livestock, or other animals. Examples could include:
 - a. Handling, slaughtering, de-feathering, butchering, culling, preparing the animal for consumption
 - b. Consuming uncooked or undercooked food or related uncooked food products, including unpasteurized milk or other unpasteurized dairy products
2. Direct contact with water or surfaces contaminated with feces, unpasteurized milk or unpasteurized dairy products, or parts (carcasses, internal organs, etc.) of potentially infected animals
3. Direct contact with persons who have had prolonged exposure to potentially infected birds or other animals in a confined space

Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations

- Use standard, contact and airborne precautions, including eye protection.
- Place patient in an airborne infection isolation room (AIIR).
- If an AIIR is not available, isolate the patient in a private room.

Diagnostic Testing Recommendations

Outpatient

- Perform molecular testing (RT-PCR) for influenza A viruses on upper respiratory tract specimens.

Examples can include:

- Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab and a nasal swab combined with an oropharyngeal swab (e.g., two swabs combined into one viral transport media vial).
- If conjunctivitis is present, collect both a conjunctival swab and an NP swab.

Inpatient

- Perform molecular testing (RT-PCR) for influenza A viruses on upper respiratory tract specimens, and lower respiratory tract infections if severe disease is present. Examples can include:
 - Upper respiratory tract specimens as above.
 - Lower respiratory tract specimens (e.g., an endotracheal aspirate or bronchoalveolar lavage fluid in intubated patients or induced sputum) collected for influenza testing.

Rapid influenza diagnostic tests are not a reliable indicator of novel influenza A virus infection, and the results should not be used to guide infection control or antiviral treatment decisions.

Treatment Recommendations

- Start oseltamivir (twice daily x 5 days), even if more than 48 hours have elapsed since illness onset and regardless of illness severity.
- Do not delay antiviral treatment while waiting for test results.

Additional guidance related to influenza A(H5N1) [testing](#), [treatment](#), [infection control](#), and [prevention](#) is available.

Reference: [Clinician Brief: Evaluating and Managing Patients Exposed to Animals or Persons Infected with Novel Influenza A Viruses of Public Health Concern](#) | [Bird Flu](#) | [CDC](#)

Reminder: Steps for Suspected Avian Influenza Cases

If you suspect a case of **Novel Avian Influenza**, follow these steps immediately:

- **Isolate the patient** and implement infection control measures.
- **Start antiviral treatment** as soon as possible.
- **Report the case** to the **Arkansas Department of Health Zoonotic Section**:
 - **Business hours (M-F 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM):** 501-280-4136
 - **After hours:** 1-800-651-3493
- **Collect respiratory specimens** while using appropriate **personal protective equipment (PPE)** to test for **novel influenza A viruses**.
- **Consider additional testing** for other respiratory illnesses, including **SARS-CoV-2**, based on local disease activity.

Timely action is critical. Contact ADH with any questions or concerns.