Person in Texas contracts virulent strain of bird flu after contact with cattle, in second known US case

A person in Texas has been diagnosed with a highly virulent strain of bird flu, the first such case since the virus was detected in a handful of dairy cattle in several states across the country [late March].

The Texas Department of State Health Services said in a statement [April 1] that the infected person worked on a dairy farm where some cows tested positive last week for the H5N1 strain of bird flu, which is considered to be a highly pathogenic, or infectious, strain. The patient’s main symptom was pink eye.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a [statement April 1], saying, “This infection does not change the H5N1 bird flu human health risk assessment for the U.S. general public, which CDC considers to be low.”

Cases of this particular strain of avian flu in humans are rare but fatal in more than 50% of those infected, according to the CDC. A 21-year-old man in Vietnam died March 23 after being infected with the virus, according to a statement from the Vietnamese Ministry of Health.

The case in Texas is the second human case of this strain of bird flu ever detected in the U.S. The first case was confirmed in 2022, in a Colorado man who was a state prison inmate and exposed to the virus while working on a poultry farm as part of a pre-release employment program.

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