

National Association of Dairy Regulatory Officials



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RESOURCES FOR RAW MILK CHEESE PROCESSORS DURING THE HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA OUTBREAK IN DAIRY CATTLE

The National Association of Dairy Regulatory Officials (NADRO) – in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), and state partners – is sharing some best practices and resources that may help raw milk cheese processors to facilitate the early detection of potential highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 virus (HPAI). This follows the release of [preliminary results](#) of research conducted by Cornell University, commissioned by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and FDA, which suggest that HPAI may survive the 60-day aging process in some varieties of raw milk cheese that is made with raw milk containing HPAI.

I. BEST PRODUCTION PRACTICES FOR AGED RAW MILK CHEESE PROCESSORS

NADRO, USDA, FDA, NASDA, and state partners recommend the following best practices:

- Dairy producers should monitor herds for H5N1 infection by enrolling in USDA or state testing programs.
- If a herd becomes infected with H5N1, dairy producers should segregate clinically ill cows from the rest of the milking herd.
- Dairy processors should not use milk from infected cows in the production of raw milk products, such as raw milk cheese.
- Heat treating (thermization) or pasteurization are both effective measures that inactivate HPAI. Research to date has demonstrated heating raw milk at 54°C (130°F) for at least 15 minutes or 60°C (140°F) for at least 10 seconds inactivates HPAI in raw milk.
- Dairy processors may wish to consider the value of tracking and documenting source milk and herd status along with time and temperature controls (if thermization is used) for each lot of finished product.

II. USDA PROGRAMS FOR MILK AND HERD TESTING

USDA offers several tools for dairy processors and producers to monitor the raw milk supply and/or health of their herds, including the National Milk Testing Strategy and the [Dairy Herd Status Program](#).

a. How To Enroll in the National Milk Testing Strategy

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Raw milk cheese processors may voluntarily enroll in USDA's National Milk Testing Strategy. The National Milk Testing Strategy facilitates comprehensive HPAI surveillance of the nation's milk supply and dairy herds. Enrolled raw milk cheese processors can have raw milk tested for the presence of HPAI prior to the aging process of cheese made from the milk. By testing the raw milk before commencing the aging processes, processors can quickly identify and remove affected milk from their supply, saving valuable time and resources.

Processors can enroll in the National Milk Testing Strategy by:

1. Contacting the [state dairy regulator](#);
2. Contacting the [state animal health official](#); or
3. Contacting the USDA [area veterinarian in charge](#).

Raw milk samples will be collected from processors monthly, or more frequently as determined by the state, at no cost to the processor. Samples will be shipped to the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories for initial testing. Non-negative results will be communicated back to the processor and additional follow-up testing will occur to confirm the presence of HPAI. Initial results are generally expected within seven to ten days.

More information on the National Milk Testing Strategy can be found [here](#).

b. How To Enroll in the Dairy Herd Status Program

Producers may enroll in USDA's Dairy Herd Status Program to monitor herd status. The Dairy Herd Status Program is a voluntary program that offers dairy producers the option to monitor their herds via weekly sampling of bulk milk tanks. Enrolled dairy producers agree to weekly milk testing of their herds at no cost to the producer. After three consecutive weeks of negative test results for HPAI at a National Animal Health Laboratory Network laboratory, herds receive "Monitored Unaffected" status. Continued weekly bulk tank sample testing with negative results and participation in the Dairy Herd Status Program allows herds to maintain the "Monitored Unaffected" status.

More information on the Dairy Herd Status Program can be found [here](#).

Additional Resources:

Additional USDA resources and support for dairy herd producers can be found [here](#).

Processors seeking to test finished product that may have been manufactured before the implementation of any raw milk surveillance efforts can visit [here](#).