

Protecting Dairy Workers from Bird Flu and Other Infectious Diseases

H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), or "bird flu", is a zoonotic (animal-to-human) disease that has been found in cows and dairy workers.

The Challenge

In March 2024 scientists discovered that dairy cows can become infected with bird flu, which they can then pass along to people. Unlike poultry or hog farms, dairy farms have little recent experience preventing such zoonotic diseases. In a state where dairy supports 120,700 jobs and \$52.8 billion in sales, it's important for Wisconsin dairy workers and their employers to know how and why to prevent cows from sickening workers, and vice versa.

The Response

Wisconsin's Occupational Health and Safety Surveillance Program joined forces with infectious disease colleagues and a marketing company to educate dairy workers through a professional media campaign. To ensure a clear and meaningful campaign, the Occupational Health team connected the marketing company to community partners who work

*Partners who have worked on and with dairy farms helped the media team **understand** this audience.*

closely with dairies and farmworkers. The resulting "Gear Up, Wash Up, Step Up" campaign focused on dairy-heavy regions of the state and included billboards, postcards, print ads in farm publications, agricultural

radio ads and social media. The campaign was designed to promote simple prevention practices to reduce exposure risk to bird flu and other diseases that may infect farm animals and workers.



The Impact

The five-week campaign generated 5.75 million impressions across six media tactics and two languages (English and Spanish). This was 800,000 more impressions than planned. The campaign reached over 438,000 rural individuals statewide, including farm workers and owners. The 14,200 resulting visits to our website was nearly twice as high as expected. More importantly, trusted partners told us the campaign was clear and compelling. Building on this success, the campaign will be reprised in Summer 2026. Whether the next disease scare comes from bird flu or something else, these materials will help keep Wisconsin's dairy operations safe and steady.

*Media materials were delivered
5.75 million
times in five weeks*

For more information, visit

[https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health/farm-health.htm)

[health/farm-health.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health/farm-health.htm) or contact DHSOccHealth@dhs.wi.gov