



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza - Cats

FEBRUARY 28, 2025 – GUIDANCE FOR COMPANION ANIMAL VETERINARIANS

In general, the risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in domestic cats in the general population is low. While cats have been known to be susceptible to this strain of H5N1 since 2022, an increasing number of [domestic cats, wild cougars and captive wild cats](#) have been identified in several states. The majority of those domestic cats were exposed at infected dairy or poultry farms. However, there have been a smaller number of detections in cats and captive wild felids associated with ingestion of contaminated raw animal products, including raw pet food. Cats are most likely to become infected if they are living on an infected poultry or dairy farm, ingest infected wild birds, or are fed infected animal products (raw milk, raw pet food products). There is no evidence of cat to cat or cat to human transmission. Epidemiological investigations of these cases continue.

On February 25, 2025, two indoor-only, domestic cats in King and Snohomish counties were tested and confirmed to be infected with H5N1 (HPAI). One died and one became severely ill after consuming commercially prepared raw pet food, Wild Coast Raw brand Boneless Free Range Chicken Formula. Preliminary results by the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) indicate the virus is genotype B3.13 suggesting the infection was likely associated with ingestion of contaminated raw pet food and not from ingesting a wild bird.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture issued a public health alert February 14, 2025, about Wild Coast Raw brand Boneless Free Range Chicken formula frozen raw pet food, after it tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus. The affected product is packaged in round, white plastic containers, with a predominantly green label with known affected lots 22660 and 22664 and best by date 12/2025 printed on stickers on the lids. The product was sold through distributors in Washington and Oregon.

Veterinarians should specifically ask pet owners about whether raw milk and raw diets are being fed, share information about the risk, and recommend pet owners not to feed raw products to pets. Veterinarians can also advise pet owners who continue to feed pets raw diets to keep track of and take pictures of the product information such as the brand, product/formula type, lot code, and best by or expiration date, as well as when their pet consumed each.

Clinical signs of HPAI infection in cats include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Low appetite
- Upper Respiratory infection
- Progression of illness to pneumonia
- Difficulty breathing
- Neurologic signs, like tremors, seizures, incoordination, head pressing, or blindness



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If veterinarians suspect HPAI in a domestic cat, testing is available. Contact WSDA or [Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory](#) (WADDL) to discuss possible testing options if you are concerned about a case related to the pet food recall in Washington. Cats with a history of ingestion of raw pet food, or ingestion of a wild bird that presents with clinical signs, should notify the State Veterinarians Office (360-902-1878) to determine what testing should be conducted. Cats presenting with neurologic signs should be tested for rabies first, and then will be forwarded on for HPAI testing. HPAI is a reportable disease in any domestic animal or bird and veterinarians can report here: [WSDA Reportable Disease Portal](#).

Animal health staff should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when in contact with animals suspected or confirmed of being infected with HPAI, acutely sick animals that have history of ingestion of raw milk, wild birds, or raw or undercooked animal products. Public health monitors all people (owners and veterinary staff) exposed to animals infected with HPAI through 10 days following their last exposure. **There have been no documented human cases of HPAI following exposure to an infected cat.**

These cases highlight the importance of ongoing testing and taking proper precautions to protect animal and public health. Veterinarians are well versed in the zoonotic risks that are inherent to veterinary medicine.

To see all the Oregon announcements, [visit the ODA Avian Influenza page and scroll down to HPAI Announcements](#).

More Information:

- [HPAI Detections in Mammals USDA-APHIS](#)
- [AVMA- HPAI in Cats](#)
- [ODA News Release](#)
- [WSDA Blog Post: HPAI Update](#)