

# TOOLBOX TALK – PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR H5N1 BIRD FLU

Toolbox Talks serve as a guide to help lead focused discussions with workers about hazards they may face on the job. Toolbox Talks support brief presentations and discussions about safety and health hazards. This guide is meant to help employers talk to workers about using personal protective equipment to prevent exposures to H5N1 bird flu.

## Basics of H5N1 Bird Flu

H5N1 bird flu is a virus that has been found in cows, poultry, and other animals. People who work with infected animals or their byproducts (for example, raw milk), such as dairy and poultry workers, may get sick from the virus. Confirmed cases in the United States to date have all been mild. Symptoms in people can range from no symptoms to mild or severe symptoms, including death.

## How it spreads

This virus could spread from animals to people in several ways:

- If you touch something contaminated with the virus and touch your eyes, nose, or mouth
- If a liquid contaminated with live virus splashes into your eyes (like raw cow's milk from an infected cow, for example)
- If you eat, drink, or inhale droplets contaminated with virus
- If you handle sick or dead animals infected with the virus

## How to prevent exposures to H5N1 Bird Flu

Our workplace is taking steps to help prevent exposures to H5N1. We are implementing engineering controls, like proper ventilation, and administrative controls, like providing access to more hand washing stations, and having you monitor yourself and your co-workers for illness. However, sometimes these controls are not feasible or enough to reduce potentially harmful exposures so there are situations where you should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).



# How PPE protects you

PPE, such as respirators, goggles, gloves, and fluid resistant clothing, is needed in some cases to reduce exposures, especially if you come in direct contact with sick animals or their secretions during your work.

## Respirators

- Protect you from breathing in small droplets or biological material from animal secretions (such as, raw milk, saliva, urine, or other respiratory secretions) and stops you from touching your mouth and lips during work.

## Goggles

- Protect your eyes from splashes and stops you from touching your eyes during work.

## Gloves, fluid resistant protective clothing, and head/hair coverings

- Protect you from getting animal secretions on your skin, hair, or clothing. This helps to keep the virus away from your eyes, nose, or mouth.

You must wear your PPE correctly for it to protect you. You should be trained on how to use your PPE and on its limitations. You should also follow our workplace instructions for how to clean, maintain, and store your PPE. You may need more PPE than what you normally wear. We completed a site-specific hazard assessment to help determine what PPE to wear. If you have any questions about what type of PPE to wear or when and how to use it, please come talk to me or to your supervisor.

*High exposure* levels to H5N1 can occur when you encounter live or dead animals that are confirmed or potentially infected with H5N1 or their milk and other secretions. Workers in *high exposure* settings should wear the following PPE:

- [NIOSH Approved® particulate respirator](#)
- Fluid-resistant coveralls
- Optional waterproof apron over the top of coveralls
- Safety goggles (Optional face shield over the top of goggles and respirator)
- Boot covers or boots
- Head cover or hair cover
- Disposable gloves with optional outer work gloves

The potential for *medium exposure* levels to H5N1 can occur when farms in our region have confirmed or potentially infected animals, even if there are no confirmed or potentially infected animals on our farm. Additionally, workers on dairy farms that have animals confirmed or potentially infected may have the potential for *medium exposure* levels if they are working with healthy non-lactating animals. In medium exposure settings, you should wear the following PPE:

- [NIOSH Approved® particulate respirator](#)
- Safety goggles
- Disposable gloves with optional outer work gloves

## Safely put on and remove your PPE

Make sure that you use separate areas to put on your clean PPE and remove your dirty PPE.

For instructions on the correct steps to put on and take off your PPE, follow these instructions:

- [Put On Personal Protective Equipment Safely – High Exposure](#)
- [Remove Personal Protective Equipment Safely – High Exposure](#)
- [Put On Personal Protective Equipment Safely – High Exposure for Milking Parlor](#)
- [Remove Personal Protective Equipment Safely – High Exposure for Milking Parlor](#)
- [Put On and Remove Personal Protective Equipment Safely – Medium Exposure](#)

## While wearing PPE

When you are wearing your PPE, make sure to avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose, after touching any contaminated materials. Also, you should not eat, drink, touch your phone, smoke, vape, chew gum, dip tobacco, or use the bathroom until your PPE has been removed and you have been able to wash your hands. Make sure to frequently wash your hands throughout the day, especially if you change out your gloves. Remind your co-workers of this as well.

Make sure to protect yourself and your co-workers from heat stress. Learn the [symptoms and risk factors, first aid, and prevention for heat-related illness](#). You should work with a buddy and observe each other for signs of heat-related illness. Also, make sure to take [frequent breaks](#) to rest and hydrate in a cool clean area after removing dirty PPE. This is important because removing PPE to take a drink while you are still working could expose you to virus that could make you sick.

## What should I do after I take off my PPE

Take a shower at the end of your shift to remove any contamination from skin and hair and put on clean clothes. If there is no shower facility on site, clean up as much as possible with soap and water, put on clean (uncontaminated) clothing and leave straight from work to shower at home and put on clean clothes afterward. This helps prevent transferring the virus from work to home.

We have a designated location at work for you to leave your contaminated work clothing and equipment to be cleaned. That way, you do not need to remove them from the facility until they are cleaned and disinfected. If you work at multiple farms, you should have different equipment and work clothing for each location.