# Study Reveals Bird Flu Virus Persists in Raw Cow's Milk, Raising Human Health Concerns



## Bird Flu Virus Detected in Raw Cow's Milk, Study Finds Potential Human Risk

A new study has found that raw cow's milk contaminated with the H5N1 bird flu virus can remain infectious even under standard refrigeration and may not be entirely neutralized by standard pasteurization methods. The research, conducted by scientists from the University of Wisconsin, tested milk samples from infected herds in New Mexico and Kansas and identified high levels of the virus in untreated milk.

In their laboratory tests, the researchers observed that when the contaminated raw milk was fed to mice, the animals quickly exhibited signs of illness, including respiratory and organ infections. The virus persisted in the milk even after being stored at 4°C (39°F) for five weeks.

While traditional pasteurization methods used in the United States—heating milk to 72°C (161°F) for 15 to 20 seconds—significantly reduced the virus levels, it did not completely inactivate it. The researchers noted, however, that their laboratory conditions differed from those of industrial pasteurization, which involves additional steps like preheating and homogenization that might affect the virus's survival.

Public health officials in the United States have stressed that pasteurized milk is safe and that the commercial food supply remains secure. However, the study raises concerns about the risks associated with consuming raw milk, which is available in certain health food stores and direct from artisanal producers.

Presently, no cases of bird flu transmitted through milk consumption have been reported in humans. However, a related study highlighted similar concerns about beef tissue from infected dairy cows, which, although not entering the food supply, showed contamination.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) continue to monitor the situation, advising against the consumption of raw milk to minimize the risk of infection.