# Confirmed Human Case of H5N1 Bird Flu in Michigan Dairy Worker Prompts Vaccine Development



A third human case of H5N1 bird flu in the United States has been confirmed, involving a dairy worker in Michigan who exhibited acute respiratory symptoms after contracting the virus from an infected cow. This case marks the first instance in the U.S. where the virus has caused such symptoms, as the previous two cases affected individuals only suffered from conjunctivitis.

H5N1, which has significantly impacted animal populations since its recurrence in 2020, is now present in 68 cattle herds across nine U.S. states. Increased surveillance efforts are expected to identify more human cases in the coming weeks.

Approximately 220 individuals in Michigan are currently being monitored due to potential exposure, and the state is initiating blood tests to detect antibodies against H5N1. Despite these developments, the CDC maintains that the overall risk to humans remains low but advises personal protective measures for those in direct contact with cattle or poultry.

In response, the U.S. government is exploring significant investments in mRNA vaccines for H5N1. Moderna and Pfizer are engaged in early-stage human trials for such vaccines, with potential funding from the U.S. Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). Concurrently, the U.S. Agriculture Department plans to begin testing a newly developed mRNA vaccine for cattle, aimed at reducing human exposure to the virus.

The rapid development and potential deployment of these vaccines are in line with efforts to mitigate the risk of a potential pandemic should H5N1 mutate in a way that facilitates human-to-human transmission.