# Health Alert issued as third case of H5N1 bird flu confirmed in the United States



A recent health alert has been issued following the third confirmed case of human infection with H5N1 bird flu in the United States. A Michigan farmer reported symptoms such as cough, sore throat, and watery eyes. This case, confirmed last week, comes after reports of similar cases among farmworkers in Texas and Michigan.

Virologist Dr. Rick Bright, writing in the *New York Times*, highlighted the potential danger, noting that the appearance of respiratory symptoms indicates an increased likelihood of human-to-human transmission. Dr. Bright emphasized deficiencies in early virus containment and the lack of comprehensive serology testing, which could detect virus spread through antibodies. This failure complicates targeted public health measures and resource allocation.

The bird flu has affected cattle herds in nine U.S. states, showing a concerning shift as these cases were predominantly farmworkers in contact with infected cows and milk. There's an ongoing risk as these herds carry the virus, and human cases may increase if proper measures aren't adopted.

Parallel to these events, a UK panel of government-appointed experts assessed the situation, citing an unprecedented rise in transmission risk. They stressed the potential danger to the UK through imported tainted raw dairy products from the U.S., estimating a 1 in 20 chance of a Brit being infected in the next six months.

To mitigate the risk, the UK Health Security Agency has recommended increased surveillance, especially from September when birds migrate from the U.S. Additionally, they advised monitoring cattle on UK dairy farms and suggested precautionary measures, including using personal protective equipment (PPE) for farm workers and warning the public about the risks of consuming raw dairy products.

In response to these human cases of bird flu, the Biden administration is funding Moderna's late-stage trial for an mRNA vaccine targeting the H5N1 strain. This initiative aims to prepare for a potential pandemic by ensuring the availability of vaccines if human transmission becomes more prevalent.