



## Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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## Avian Influenza A (H5N1) and (H7N9) Lab Fact Sheet

To date, neither H5N1 nor H7N9 have been identified among humans in the United States. However, health officials and health care providers must be vigilant in identifying suspect cases. Basic guidelines regarding procedures for handling suspect cases follow.

### BEFORE TESTING FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA

Report suspect cases of H5N1 and H7N9 to the local public health agency or the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). At DHSS, contact the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, 573-751-6113 during business hours or call 800/392-0272 (24/7). The Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention should be contacted whenever testing for avian influenza is being considered.

After consultation with the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention and determination that testing is necessary, contact the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (MSPHL) at 573/751-3334 or 800/392-0272 prior to collecting lab specimens. See the [Avian Information Sheet](#) for instructions for collecting and submitting laboratory specimens.

Please refer to the CDC website regarding avian influenza for further information:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/professional/infect-control.htm>.

Influenza H5N1-specific and H7N9-specific RT-PCR testing conducted under Biosafety Level (BSL) 2 conditions is the preferred method for diagnosis. The MSPHL is the recommended site for initial diagnosis and can perform influenza both H5N1 and H7N9 RT-PCR testing.

### SUBMITTING SPECIMENS

After consultation with the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, specimens should be packaged in a mailer suitable for the transportation of infectious substances, these are available from the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (MSPHL). Complete instructions can be found at:  
[https://health.mo.gov/lab/pdf/sphl\\_avianflu\\_instructions.pdf](https://health.mo.gov/lab/pdf/sphl_avianflu_instructions.pdf)

Highly pathogenic avian influenza A (H5N1) is classified as a USDA [select agent](#). Any work with the virus (other than commercial rapid diagnostic tests or RT-PCR) must be under stringent Biosafety Level (BSL) 3+ laboratory conditions. Therefore, respiratory virus cultures should not be performed in most clinical laboratories, and such cultures should not be ordered for patients suspected of having H5N1 infection.

### IF YOU SUSPECT AVIAN FLU

If you suspect a human case of avian influenza and you have ordered testing with a commercial rapid influenza antigen test kit, results should be interpreted with caution. Clinicians should be aware that these tests have relatively low sensitivities. A negative result does not exclude a diagnosis of avian influenza. In addition, a positive result does not distinguish between seasonal and avian influenza A viruses.

[www.health.mo.gov](http://www.health.mo.gov)

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Additional information is on the DHSS Pandemic Influenza website at <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/panflu/pangen.php> or at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>.

*Document updated March 2022*