



Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

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

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 Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention (DHSS-BCDCP). To contact DHSS-BCDCP, call 573-751-6113 during business hours or 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 BCDCP and testing approval has been given, contact the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (MSPHL) at 573-751-3334 (or 800-392-0272 afterhours) prior to collecting lab specimens. See the [Avian Information Sheet](#) for instructions on collecting and submitting laboratory specimens.

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

H5N1 and H7N9-specific rRT-PCR testing conducted under Biosafety Level 2 (BSL-2) conditions is the preferred method for diagnosis. The MSPHL is the recommended site for initial diagnosis and can perform both H5N1 and H7N9 rRT-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. Mailers are available at no charge from the MSPHL. Please contact the MSPHL at 573-751-3334 to request a kit. Complete collection and shipping instructions can be found at: 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 conducted under Biosafety Level 3+ (BSL-3+) laboratory conditions. Therefore, respiratory virus culture testing 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 avian influenza is suspected 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 preclude infection with avian influenza. In addition, a positive antigen result cannot distinguish between seasonal and avian influenza viruses.

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/>.

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The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' vision is optimal health and safety for all Missourians, in all communities, for life.