

Erica Pan, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer

Gavin Newsom
Governor

February 21, 2025

Dear California Veterinarian,


The strain of avian influenza A(H5N1) currently circulating in California has been identified as the cause of often severe disease in domestic cats. Detection of any influenza A in a cat is considered a novel infection—and, in the current environment, presumptive H5N1 until demonstrated otherwise.

CDPH is providing this notice to advise veterinarians regarding their reporting requirements for influenza A when diagnosed in a cat. Per Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, [Section 2500](#), a Novel Virus Infection with Pandemic Potential requires immediate reporting. Since influenza A of any type in a cat is highly unusual and influenza (H5) is a novel virus infection with pandemic potential, reporting is required. Health care providers, including veterinarians, must report cases of novel influenza A infection in patients (e.g., cats) immediately via telephone, fax, or electronic notification to the local health officer for the jurisdiction where the owner of patient resides. For questions about communicable disease reporting requirements, please contact your [local health department](#).

Influenza testing in cats is available through commercial diagnostic laboratories, some academic institutions, and certain public health laboratories. Any feline with influenza A infection is a public health concern as it presents a potential new route of exposure for humans and may act as a sentinel for new sources of infection. Prompt reporting of influenza A infection in cats to local health departments will enable public health officials to monitor household and clinic contacts of ill cat/s for symptoms of illness, as well as identify route of exposure for the cat (e.g., raw food, raw milk, etc.). Your reports will enable us to provide you with timely data to inform your clinical practice and guide public health interventions.

For additional information about influenza A in cats and steps to protect veterinary staff, please see: [What Veterinarians Need to Know about Bird Flu](#).

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Watt".

James Watt, MD, MPH
Acting Deputy Director and Deputy State Epidemiologist
Center for Infectious Diseases
California Department of Public Health