



**Maryland
Department of Agriculture**

Office of the Secretary

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Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary
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Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry
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January 1, 2024

Dear Industry Partners,

Effective Wednesday, January 1, 2025, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) will require mandatory testing of regulated raw milk in Maryland, to enhance surveillance of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in dairy cattle and to prevent the spread of the disease within Maryland.

Recent outbreaks of HPAI in dairy cattle across several states have raised concerns. Disease transmission has been observed from farm to farm through various means, including animals, equipment, and human contact. Despite the diligent biosecurity efforts by farmers, there is an ongoing need for increased testing and surveillance to ensure early detection and containment of this highly contagious disease.

Given Maryland's diverse livestock industry, including significant commercial poultry operations and numerous backyard flocks, it is critical to implement strong detection and mitigation measures to protect both the poultry and livestock sectors from devastating losses.

In a proactive effort to combat HPAI and safeguard Maryland's agricultural industry, MDA and MDH have issued a statewide testing mandate, which includes:

- Cooperatives and milk processors marketing milk products from Maryland dairy farms must submit milk samples from each farm every 14 days.
- Small processors marketing milk products must provide milk samples every 30 days.
- Pet food dairies (including dairy cattle or dairy goats) must submit milk samples every 14 days.

Testing will be conducted at the Maryland Animal Health Laboratory in Salisbury, at no cost to farmers, milk processors, or haulers. In the event of a positive HPAI test, the Departments will work closely with the processor to identify the affected farm. The MDA's Animal Health Program will then take additional samples to confirm the farm's HPAI status. At the same time, MDH will work with the farm and MDA to protect the health of the farmworkers and the public.

If a positive case is confirmed, the Department will collaborate with the affected dairy farm to ensure business continuity. This includes providing guidance on biosecurity measures to mitigate risk and allow for the continued shipping of milk, while preventing further spread to other farms.

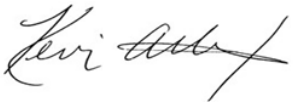
HPAI can have severe, long-term consequences for dairy herds, as the disease spreads rapidly, leading to significant losses in milk production and overall herd productivity. Moreover, HPAI remains fatal for domestic poultry, making early detection essential to protecting animals, workers, and the industry as a whole.

Biosecurity remains the best defense against HPAI, and the Maryland Department of Agriculture offers information and assistance to help farmers strengthen their biosecurity practices. The Department encourages all Maryland dairies to test any cow showing symptoms of HPAI.

We greatly appreciate the dairy and poultry industries' ongoing collaboration with the Department to protect Maryland's #1 industry—agriculture—during this national outbreak.

For questions about the testing program, please contact the MDA's Animal Health Program at 410-841-5810 or email MD.DairyHPAI@maryland.gov. A list of Frequently Asked Questions is also available on the Department's website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kevin Atticks".

Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary