



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

**ROY COOPER** • Governor  
**KODY H. KINSLEY** • Secretary  
**MARK BENTON** • Deputy Secretary for Health  
**SUSAN KANSAGRA** • Assistant Secretary for  
Public Health Division of Public Health

To: Local Health Directors and Animal Control Officers  
From: Carl Williams, DVM, State Public Health Veterinarian  
Subject: Testing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Cats  
Date: 26 JUN 24

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) Division of Public Health is notifying Local Health Departments and animal control agencies of planned testing of stray or feral cats for influenza A H5N1. A subset of stray or feral cats submitted by certain counties to the North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (NCSLPH) for rabies testing, but which test negative for rabies, will be forwarded to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory for influenza surveillance testing.

Testing for influenza in stray or feral cats will be limited to counties which have a high proportion of dairy or poultry farms, and thus a greater likelihood of the cats being exposed to influenza. The counties are Duplin, Sampson, Bladen, Wayne, Anson, Iredell, Randolph, Lincoln, Alamance, Rowan, Wilkes, Davidson, Haywood, Alexander, Guilford. County Health Directors will be notified if an infected animal is identified in their jurisdiction, and contacts will be monitored for symptoms in accordance with established HPAI monitoring protocols.

The United States has been experiencing a large outbreak of influenza A H5N1 in animals since 2022. This H5N1 virus has been [detected](#) in poultry, wild birds, and a wide variety of mammals and has recently been detected in dairy cows and in [people](#) with exposure to dairy herds.

The virus causing this H5N1 outbreak (H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b) has also been identified in [domestic cats](#) associated with farms that had livestock cases. Some cats that tested positive for H5N1 had mild illness while others had a more severe neurologic presentation. This planned testing is being done as part of broader efforts to increase surveillance for influenza A H5N1 in the state and is part of a national effort coordinated by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories.

When completing the NCSLPH rabies [requisition form](#), please print legibly and clearly indicate if the cat is stray or feral. Please include complete contact information for results

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LOCATION: 5605 Six Forks Road, Building 3, Raleigh, NC  
27609 MAILING ADDRESS: 1931 Mail Service Center,  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1931 [www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov) • TEL: 919-  
707-5000 • FAX: 919-870-4829

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notification. If known, please include any information about contact with dairy cattle, wild birds, or poultry.

If you have any questions, please contact John Bunting, NCSLPH Rabies Supervisor, at 919-807-8824 / [john.bunting@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:john.bunting@dhhs.nc.gov) or Dr. Rebecca Pelc, NCSLPH Virology/Serology Unit Manager, at 919-807-8868 / [rebecca.pelc@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:rebecca.pelc@dhhs.nc.gov).

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