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Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Detected in South Dakota Dairy Herd

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (DANR) and the Animal Industry Board (AIB) have received confirmation from the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) of the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in a dairy cattle herd in South Dakota. This is the first confirmed case of HPAI in a dairy farm in South Dakota.

“South Dakota Dairy Producers encourages all dairy producers to closely monitor their herd and contact their herd veterinarian immediately if cattle appear symptomatic,” said Marv Post, Chairman of South Dakota Dairy Producers. “USDA continues to emphasize that pasteurization kills the virus and that milk and dairy products are safe to consume.”

Symptoms are mostly restricted to late-stage lactating cows and include a drop in milk production, loss of appetite, and changes in manure consistency. Producers are encouraged to practice good biosecurity on their farms such as limiting visitors and excluding any wild birds or animals from the dairy.

Dairies are required to ensure only milk from healthy animals enter the food supply chain. Additionally, the pasteurization process of heating milk to a high temperature ensures milk and dairy products can be safely consumed, as confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). At this stage, there is no concern about the safety of the commercial milk supply or risk to consumer health. In line with long-standing policy, the CDC does not recommend consuming unpasteurized milk or raw milk. Pasteurization has continually proven to successfully inactivate bacteria and viruses, like influenza, in milk.

USDA, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as state veterinary and public health officials, continue to investigate the emerging illness among dairy cows that is causing decreased lactation, low appetite, and other symptoms.