



GOLETA SANITARY
Water Resource Recovery District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Goleta Sanitary District Reports Small Detection of H5N1 Virus

Goleta, CA —The Goleta Sanitary District was notified Tuesday, Nov. 19 at 3:04 p.m. that the H5N1 virus (also known as avian influenza A or H5) was detected in the wastewater at the Goleta Sanitary District's wastewater treatment plant. This is the first time H5 has been detected at the plant, but it has been detected in numerous other counties in California, including recently in San Luis Obispo.

Background Information: Goleta Sanitary District participates in wastewater testing via a group called Cal-SuWers under the California Department of Public Health. This testing program was created following the outbreak of SARS-CoV2 (commonly referred to as Covid-19). In an aim to monitor viral loads in wastewater as a proactive measure to identify outbreaks before they escalate, testing is being performed state-wide for the presence of viruses including the flu, respiratory illnesses, and recently the H5 virus.

Due to the method of sample collection and analysis, the source of H5 cannot be determined at this time, but Goleta Sanitary District staff are tracking any identified detections in an attempt to gather more information. The source could be animal or human in nature. The Goleta Sanitary District is fully committed to working with the California Department of Public Health and the CDC in monitoring the results and will keep the public informed.

In the meantime, the public is urged to follow these commonsense practices:

- Avoid exposures to sick or dead animals, including wild birds, poultry, or other domesticated birds, and other wild or domesticated animals (including cows) if possible.

- Avoid exposures to animal feces, bedding (litter), unpasteurized (“raw”) milk, or materials that have been touched by, or are close to birds, or other animals with suspected or confirmed avian influenza A (H5N1), if possible.
- People should not drink raw milk. Pasteurization kills avian influenza A (H5N1) viruses, and pasteurized milk is safe to drink.
- People who have job-related contact with infected or potentially infected birds or other animals should be aware of the risk of exposure to avian influenza viruses and should take proper precautions. People should wear appropriate and recommended personal protective equipment when exposed to an infected or potentially infected animal(s).

According to officials, across the state, as of July 11, 2024, there is no indication that H5 detections in wastewater are associated with human-to-human transmissions of H5.

About the Goleta Sanitary District

The Goleta Sanitary District was created in 1942 to provide wastewater collection and treatment services for the Goleta Valley. Today the District’s 132-mile-long network of underground pipes deliver approximately 4 million gallons of wastewater to the District’s award-winning treatment plant every day. At the facility, wastewater is treated and cleaned to very high standards by certified staff before being reused for irrigation or discharged safely into the ocean. The District is governed by a 5-member elected Board of Directors and is committed to protecting public health and the environment through state-of-the-art treatment process and the delivery of cost-effective public services.

The District provides wastewater treatment services for its own customers as well as four other public agencies: Goleta West Sanitary District, University of California at Santa Barbara, City of Santa Barbara Municipal Airport, and certain facilities of Santa Barbara County.