Flying blind: Navigating bird flu in Trump's america

As I'm writing this article 67 people have been infected with H5N1 or "bird Flu". More than 145 million chickens, ducks, and turkeys have been slaughtered due to the virus. We are, as scientists have been saying, just "one mutation away" from another pandemic. It's no surprise how we got here: America's industrial farming creates the perfect conditions for diseases to spread. But instead of stepping in to protect people and stop another global pandemic, the government has essentially left farmers to handle this outbreak on their own. What will happen next is unclear. Trump's history of empowering big business and ignoring public health risks – along with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. 's very well known disdain for public health – leaves us with a terrifying and uneasy view of the future. The CDC has been tracking what it knows about the virus, and recommending actions to take, but Trump's halting of scientific research and federal public health communications puts this critical information in jeopardy. This is a lot to take in, I know. It's scary, and overwhelming, and flashbacks from the 2020s probably have you wanting to grab as much toilet paper, eggs, and dairy products as you can. This is your reminder to breathe; plan, don't panic. For right now we are ok, and we must use this time to build community, to take care of each other, and take action. Building a community can be scary, it's kind of like trees; the best time to plant them was 20 years ago, but the next best time is now. I invite you to sit down, enjoy your cup of coffee, and read this article.

The facts (what we know right now)

What is bird flu?

It's a virus, also known as H5N1 or bird flu, that primarily infects domestic poultry and wild birds. However, mammals can also catch H5N1, including pigs, cattle and humans. The most recent outbreak affecting dairy cattle in the U.S. has resulted in more human cases than previous outbreaks in poultry.

What are the symptoms of bird flu?

Pink eye (conjunctivitis), fever, cough, aching muscles and sore throat are common symptoms of bird flu. The mortality rate for human cases in the U.S. has been low; most people recover quickly and do not require hospitalization, but some people do get very ill and can even die. Antiviral medicines can reduce the risk. If you feel sick after having contact with livestock, or after consuming raw dairy products, be sure to tell your doctor

How is bird flu spread?

- Directly from infected birds or contaminated environments.
- Through an intermediate host, such as another animal.
- Contact with an infected animal's body fluids (saliva, milk, respiratory droplets, feces).
- Breathing in small dust particles in animal habitats.
- Getting body fluids into eyes, nose, or mouth after touching

- ***How can you prevent contracting bird flu:***
- If you have a job or pastime that puts you in contact with birds or other animals, use proper protective equipment.
- Avoid direct contact with wild birds and other animals.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching birds or other animals.
- monitoring symptoms in pets and reporting any sick or dead animals to authorities to help control the spread of the virus
- Only consume pasteurized dairy products.
- Avoid contact with wild, sick or dead birds and livestock.
- Wash your hands thoroughly and often.
- Refrigerate — and cook — your eggs, meat and poultry.
- Get your human influenza vaccine.
- Protect and vaccinate your pets

What should you do right now?

Make a plan

Do you have elderly members in your family? Young children? Immunocompromised people in your inner circle? Sit down and make a plan with them. What will it look like if we go on lock down again? Do you have home schooling supplies? Laptops and internet connection? Do you have the ability to create a quarantine space if need be? Figure out what will work best for you and your family.

Stock up on supplies

Get a good amount of soap, paper towels, and other cleaning supplies to keep at your disposal. Clean often, take precautions around others, and mask, mask, mask. I know we don't want to go back to

that, but believe me, if we can do this we can continue life as normally as possible, and it can help prevent us from going into a full blown lock down once again. No one wants to be stuck inside, mask up.

Make your appointments

The dentist appointment you've been putting off, the check up you forgot about, that pain in your back you're choosing to ignore. Get checked out while you can, see the specialists and doctors you need before you can't access them again. Take care of yourself and your health, it's of the utmost importance.

Support your community and be active in it

Community activism is an important part of democracy. By getting involved in your community, you can help shape the policies and decisions that affect our lives. Raise your voice, pressure your local politicians, ask them what they're plans to take on bird flu are. Advocate for your community -especially the homeless population- and get involved with the often understaffed organizations that serve them. Keep up on the news, ask local farm workers what they need and advocate or support them where you can. We need to take care of eachother now more than ever.

- ***How to get involved***
    - ✊ Civil disobedience: challenging the system by breaking the law on purpose, for example using blockades, occupations or strikes.
    - 🛠️ Alternative building: envisioning a different future, for example by building community gardens, introducing alternative local currencies, and constructing off-grid homes - also called constructive program.
    - 🎨 Cultural activism (artivism): using creativity to draw attention to your cause, for example using theatre, music and brandalism.
    - 💻 Digital activism: making use of online platforms or using hacktivism to disrupt the digital world to make a point.
    - 💬 Raising awareness: Educating the public about the issues and solutions, for example using speeches, petitions, slogans, symbols and media campaigns.
    - 🗳️ Political activism: acting within established political institutions to create change through policy, for example by running for office or organising successful election campaigns.

- ⚖️ Legal activism: forcing change by applying existing laws, for example through climate litigation (suing companies and governments based on environmental and human-right laws) .
- 🤑 Financial activism: using monetary pressure to create change, for example through boycotts or shareholder activism

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Fighting for a better system also means recognizing where the current one fails—and how government inaction continues to make things worse. We fought back when the first Trump administration chose to not hold corporations accountable to any new worker safety standards in response to COVID-19, and we'll fight back again. Real change depends on all of us. We need to demand accountability from our elected representatives to push for policies that support independent farmers instead of factory farms. And we need to keep building a food system where profit does not come at the expense of the safety of everyone else.
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