



August 5, 2024

Dear Leaders of Departments of Agriculture or Departments of Health:

The National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments (NCIMS) Executive Board, FDA, and USDA have been working cooperatively to develop a silo sampling study to determine the presence and current nationwide prevalence of highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (H5N1 or HPAI) in bulk raw cow's milk at dairy processing facilities. Industry, state, and federal partners can gain better insight into this virus through coordinated and effective initiatives to collect data.

Reducing the circulation of this virus is beneficial for our nation's herds, flocks, and people. This collaborative study will determine the prevalence of H5N1 in bulk raw cow's milk which can inform a national strategy to control the spread of the virus to other dairy cattle and avian flocks, and to help reduce the risk that the virus could transform in ways that may increase transmission to other species, including humans.

NCIMS, FDA, and USDA will be reaching out soon to seek your voluntary participation in the form of collecting a sample of bulk raw cow's milk stored at each dairy processing facility prior to pasteurization. These samples may be collected during your routine regulatory sampling activities at Grade "A" and non-Grade "A" facilities and shipped to a third-party central location for double blinding. Please visit [www.ncims.org](http://www.ncims.org) for more information about this sampling study and to request the number of sample kits your State will need for this six-week sample collection period.

The goal for this effort is for NCIMS, FDA, and USDA to work together to gather H5N1 prevalence data to evaluate and to make decisions that are data-driven. State milk regulatory programs serve a vital role in this study and your state's participation would be sincerely appreciated.

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Chair, National Conference on Interstate Milk Shipments

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