

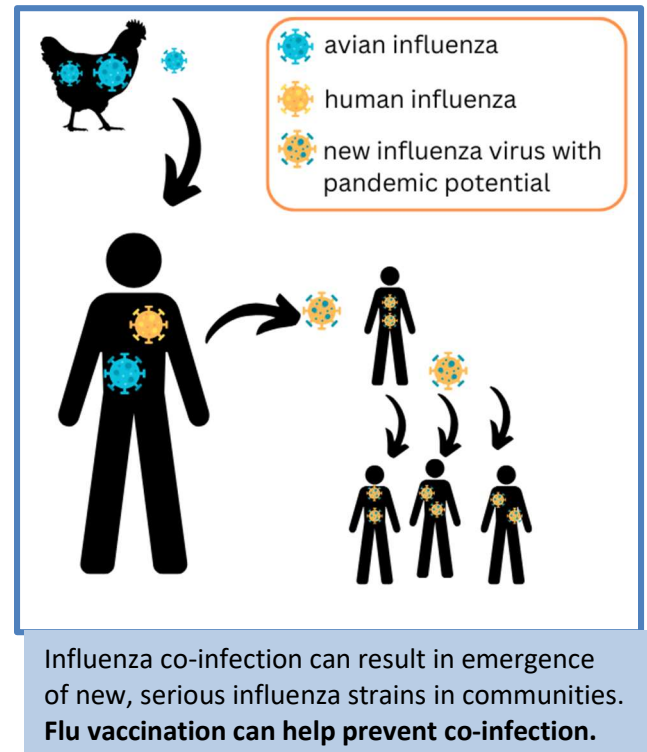
Public health and avian influenza

October 22, 2024

Recommendation: Individuals who come into close or regular contact with poultry, swine and dairy animals should receive a seasonal flu vaccine

Evidence to date tells us that the current strain of avian influenza (H5N1) that has been circulating in wild birds, poultry and dairy cattle throughout North America poses low risk to the general public. However, individuals in contact with sick birds, cattle, or other infected animals have an increased risk of becoming infected with avian influenza and should take precautions.

Influenza viruses can infect many species including poultry, swine, and dairy animals, as well as humans. When an individual is co-infected with two influenza strains, for example H5 avian influenza and a human influenza virus, the strains can exchange genes. This exchange can create a new strain that may be able to spread more easily between people and may cause a range of illness including mild symptoms or severe outcomes. This sort of scenario has caused previous human influenza pandemics.



To prevent co-infections, it is **recommended that all people that come into close or regular contact with poultry, swine, and dairy animals, including those who work with them, receive a seasonal flu vaccine (flu shot)**. The current vaccines are not designed to work against avian influenza. However, they protect against infection with human influenza virus. Getting a seasonal influenza shot is something that these individuals can do to help protect against emergence of new and serious strains of influenza in our communities.

- There are **many locations across B.C.** that offer influenza vaccinations including pharmacies, doctor's and nurse practitioner's offices, and public health units.
- You can book an appointment either **online** through the [Get Vaccinated](#) system or by **phone at 1-833-838-2323** (seven days a week, 7 am to 7pm; translators are available).
- **Non-B.C. residents** can phone the provincial call centre at 1-833-838-2323 to book an appointment.

Resources:

[Avian flu - WorkSafeBC](#)
[BCCDC - Avian Influenza](#)
[Influenza \(Flu\) Vaccine | Immunize BC](#)