

# FAQs: Remnants of bird flu virus found in retail milk in US: What you need to know

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The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced the detection of bird flu virus remnants in pasteurized milk samples. Despite the discovery, the FDA reassured the public that the commercial milk supply remains safe, emphasizing that the pasteurization process effectively inactivates the virus. This statement comes in the wake of an avian influenza outbreak that has affected dairy cattle across eight states, impacting millions of wild and commercial birds in recent years. As the situation evolves, the FDA continues to conduct extensive testing to ensure public safety and maintain confidence in the US milk supply. The detection of bird flu in dairy cows marks a concerning development, but it has not led to significant health issues in

humans, with only two mild infections reported so far. The FDA's ongoing assessments and the robust pasteurization standards are critical in managing any potential risks associated with this outbreak. Experts like Lee-Ann Jaykus, an emeritus microbiologist, affirm that there is no evidence of infectious virus in the milk, and further results from the FDA's comprehensive testing are expected soon.

Here is all you need to know about it:

Q: What did the FDA find in the pasteurized milk samples?

A: The FDA discovered remnants of the bird flu virus in some pasteurized milk samples. These findings are considered non-infectious as the pasteurization process, which involves heating milk to a specific temperature, likely inactivates the virus. Although the virus itself is not active, the presence of viral genetic material was

detected through sensitive PCR lab tests.

Q: Is pasteurized milk safe to consume given the recent findings?

A: Yes, pasteurized milk is safe to consume. The FDA and food safety experts emphasize that the pasteurization process effectively kills harmful bacteria and viruses, including the bird flu virus. The detection of viral particles does not represent a risk to consumers, and the commercial milk supply remains safe according to the FDA's ongoing assessments.

Q: What steps are being taken to ensure the safety of the milk supply?

A: The FDA is conducting a large, representative national sample testing of milk from affected animals, in processing systems, and on grocery shelves to understand the extent of the findings. They are also employing egg inoculation tests, considered the gold standard for determining viable viruses, to assess any positive findings further. These comprehensive efforts aim to maintain the integrity and safety of the U.S. milk supply.

Q: Have there been any human infections linked to this outbreak?

A: There have been two reported cases of human infection linked to the bird flu outbreak in dairy cows. Both cases were mild; one individual developed a mild eye infection, and the other experienced fatigue. These cases underline the limited impact of the virus on human health, especially when proper food safety protocols like pasteurization are followed.

(With inputs from agencies)