

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 20, 2024

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As you are aware, at the end of 2023, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) had a spillover event from the poultry population to dairy cattle. At the time of writing this letter, thirteen states have confirmed cases of HPAI in domestic livestock, including Colorado, which confirmed detection of HPAI in dairy cows in Northeast Colorado in April 2024.

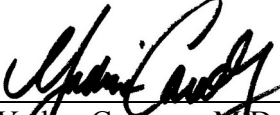
The spread of this strain to dairy cattle is a public health concern and a producer concern. While probability of human infection is low, several recent human cases in dairy workers indicate it is our workers on the front line of this issue who are most at risk. We are encouraged by and continue to urge the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to collaborate with the appropriate federal agencies to prioritize research and resources dedicated to protecting Colorado workers, producers, and veterinarians most at risk of exposure.

Colorado dairy farms require more resources to effectively respond to the outbreak and address increased biosecurity needs and economic losses. As we head into fair season, the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) and the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) are implementing the necessary 'one health' response this issue requires, including proper surveillance, testing, coordination, and guidance with respect to dairy cattle movement and quarantine measures. We further encourage the USDA to continue its close collaboration with state agencies and provide them, through cooperative agreements and additional resources, with what is needed to properly contain the disease as well as respond to production losses.

In Colorado, the cooperative work between the CDA's State Veterinarian's Office, Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment, Colorado State University, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife reinforces confidence in the state's mitigation and prevention efforts. We appreciate the relevant federal agencies, including USDA, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for working closely with state partners through guidance, authorized distributions of personal protective equipment, testing protocols, and financial support. As Colorado continues to address the HPAI outbreak in cattle, we request the federal government continue to prioritize these partnerships. This includes through consideration of efforts such as early ordering of response supplies, including antivirals, to support prepositioning supplies in our state facilities for potential human cases; adequate funding for public health laboratories and epidemiology investigations; and financial support for state personnel expenses, testing and shipping expenses for surveillance, and biosecurity planning and implementation.

As we've seen on the state level, an integrated 'one health' approach that combines USDA, CDC, and FDA activities for unified guidance assures confidence in local readiness and response. We appreciate the USDA's serious approach to this matter, encourage continued research and resources to be fully dedicated to the issue, and are ready to work with you to meet the needs of containing this outbreak in Colorado. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Yaira Caraveo, M.D.
Member of Congress




Jason Crow
Member of Congress




Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator