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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Her little name with the microphone. I just don't want it to show up on the shot.

[00:00:21] **Speaker 2** Veronica thinks it's all right. Okay. We are.

[00:00:25] **Speaker 1** Streaming. Okay. Stand by, everyone.

[00:00:35] **Speaker 2** Stand by.

[00:00:46] **Speaker 1** In public health news is bird flu or highly pathogenic avian influenza. High risk for livestock and poultry flocks, but low risk for humans. And could that change? For the latest on the status of bird flu outbreaks in Wisconsin, we turn to Tom Howard, influenza research scientist at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. And thanks very much for being here.

[00:01:10] **Speaker 2** Thank you, Fredricka. I appreciate the invitation.

[00:01:12] **Speaker 1** What is the current status of bird flu outbreaks in Wisconsin?

[00:01:17] **Speaker 2** Well, we've had approximately 4 or 5 commercial outbreaks and one backyard flock. As far as human cases, we have had only the one human case. That person has made a complete recovery, thank goodness. As far as how they're testing, we've tested about 3 or 4 other people. All have come back negative. But we continue to monitor very closely in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the DNR, to monitor all kinds of wildlife, any kind of flocks. We have had no cattle dairy farms in Wisconsin that have been impacted so far. We're hoping it stays that way.

[00:01:56] **Speaker 1** Could there be more human cases out there that people just haven't been tested or they think they've got a cold or, you know, what are the concerns about that?

[00:02:05] **Speaker 2** That definitely could be the case. And especially now when influenza has started to spike the way it has been over the past couple of weeks and we've over double doubled our number of cases for seasonal influenza over the past few weeks. So there could be some people who probably should be tested but are not being tested. But we really haven't tried to be very conservative on this and make sure that we try to capture everybody who may have had an exposure, make sure that they are tested for flu.

[00:02:36] **Speaker 1** Speaking of flu and seasonal influenza, I understand that the CDC provided flu vaccines to 12 states that also were affected by bird flu to prevent this kind of co-infection of both the human flu and the bird flu. That could lead to kind of emerging variants of that that could be more transmissible. Why didn't Wisconsin participate in that CDC vaccine program?

[00:03:05] **Speaker 2** It actually was not Wisconsin's decision. There was like six initial states that were categorized to get it at first. We're hoping to be part of the second or third round to get this vaccine from the CDC. But again, it was not in our hands.

[00:03:21] **Speaker 1** How worrisome is it from a public health standpoint that co-infection of these two different influenzas.

[00:03:31] **Speaker 2** Anytime you have co-infections, it's always a concern, whether it's whether they be an influenza and seasonal influenza, Covid, RSV, whatever the case may be, the more pathogens that actually are infecting a person, the more severe the outcome could be, which could lead to hospitalization and unfortunately, deaths. And that's what we're trying to prevent, making sure we're getting people tested in a timely manner and a proper laboratory, which now is the Wisconsin state laboratory of hygiene, to get that information and to get those tests run as quickly as possible. But, yes, it definitely could be a concern.

[00:04:06] **Speaker 1** What's the best advice for people as we head into the peak of the seasonal flu season here in the midst of this kind of avian influenza outbreak?

[00:04:17] **Speaker 2** Well, we need to control what we can control. And that's two things. One is to get the vaccine for influenza. Our numbers are a little bit low. They're about 30.7%, which is just a couple of percentage points lower than what it was last year, which is a bit disappointing, to be honest with you. We need to do a better job because we are optimistic that the vaccine is going to be effective in preventing severe illness and in many cases it'll be effective in preventing illness altogether. The other thing is to practice good hygiene, coughing into your sleeve, sneezing into tissue or throwing it away right away, washing your hands. And above all, if people do get sick, stay home and give yourself the time to heal. Too many people think it's just allergies are, as you said, just a minor cold. They could be infecting someone who could be at high risk and that person could actually result in becoming hospitalized and hobbling and not been really hopefully it's not that it will result in any kind of fatalities.

[00:05:17] **Speaker 1** As for the avian influenza, what should people be looking for to see whether or not that might be what they have?

[00:05:27] **Speaker 2** Yeah, it's very hard to say at this point. One thing that we do definitely look at at the state is do you have an exposure? Do you have an exposure to any kind of birds that are with a die off, whether it be wild birds, poultry, anything like that? Do they work on a farm, you know, on a dairy farm where maybe the cows are not producing the. Where they're supposed to be doing are there. The milk is very unusual. I mean, those are the people who come down with symptoms where we really want them to consider testing. Calling the local or state health departments, we can arrange for testing to be done as quickly as possible. But the symptoms that could be very vague. I mean, it could be just conjunctivitis. It could be just an upper respiratory, mild, upper respiratory illness. It's really not a precise symptomology when you're dealing with HPI. I've had an influenza.

[00:06:21] **Speaker 1** Well, I know you will be watching this on all of our behalves. Tom Haupt, thank you very much.

[00:06:27] **Speaker 2** And thank you, Frederick. I appreciate it.

[00:06:36] **Speaker 1** Yeah. Thank you, sir. Have a good weekend.

[00:06:40] **Speaker 2** Not a problem.

[00:06:41] **Speaker 1** Nice.

[00:06:41] **Speaker 2** It's always good to talk with you.

[00:06:42] **Speaker 1** You too. All right. Thank you. Bye bye.

[00:06:46] **Speaker 2** Now.