



Date: June 8, 2023

BCD 2023-01
Replaces BCD 2022-12

To: Wisconsin Clinicians, Infection Preventionists, Tribal Health Centers, and Local Health Departments, HERC Directors, Coroners/Medical Examiners

From: Ryan Westergaard, MD, Ph.D., Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Disease

Influenza Testing and Variant Influenza A Virus Detection

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Background

The 2023 city and county fair season in Wisconsin is right around the corner. During recent summers, swine exhibitions at agricultural fairs and other direct or indirect exposure to swine have been associated with human infections caused by variant influenza A viruses that include A/H3N2v, A/H1N2v and A/H1N1v.

Therefore, it is important for clinicians to consider influenza among patients with acute respiratory illnesses (ARI) who report direct exposure to swine (showing swine, raising swine, feeding swine, cleaning swine waste or physically touching swine), indirect exposure to swine (in a building that houses swine or attendance at an event where swine are present), or close contact with an ill person who had recent swine exposure or is known to be infected with a variant virus (approximately 6 feet).

Additionally, during recent spring and summer seasons, outbreaks of avian influenza A/H5 have been identified in commercial and backyard bird flocks nationwide, including Wisconsin. While outbreaks of A/H5 result in the complete depopulation of the flocks, the risk of human infection is very low. Facility workers and staff involved in the depopulation and remediation of the premise are considered to be exposed to the avian influenza virus regardless of any precautionary measures like personal protective equipment. A mechanism to identify persons exposed has been implemented through the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, the USDA and local public health.

ARI is defined as any two of the following conditions: fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea or nasal congestion. Patients who present with ARI and have known or suspected exposure to swine or infected bird flocks within one week prior to illness onset can be tested at no charge by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) with the prior approval of the Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH). Courier services are available for shipment of specimens to the WSLH at no charge (see below).

- Rapid influenza diagnostic tests to identify influenza A is discouraged.

- Nasopharyngeal, oropharyngeal or nasal swabs should be collected from patients who meet testing criteria, placed into one tube of viral transport media and sent to the WSLH for influenza PCR testing.
- Specimens submitted for testing must include a completed WSLH Enhanced Surveillance Requisition Form. A lab requisition form will be sent by the WSLH to the submitter upon approval of testing by DPH.

To obtain approval for testing or if you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Thomas Haupt, Wisconsin Influenza Surveillance Coordinator, at 608-266-5326, or call the Bureau of Communicable Diseases at 608-267-9003.

Shipment of surveillance specimens to the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene via Purple Mountain (Gold Cross) Courier

Specimen Packaging (WSLH Kit # 18 or equivalent):

- **Triple package as “Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373” if classified as Category B.**
- Securely tape the cap of the specimen container, wrap specimen with absorbent material; place the specimen vial into a biohazard bag; place the completed requisition form into the outer pocket of the bag.
- Place the bagged specimen and form in the styrofoam mailer with a frozen kool-pak and cushioning.
- Replace lid on the styrofoam/cardboard box; close and securely tape the cardboard box shut.
- Attach the WSLH address label to the package:
**Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene
Specimen Receiving, Communicable Disease Division
2601 Agriculture Drive
Madison, WI 53718**
- Attach the “*Biological substance, Category B / UN 3373*” label to the package.
- Attach your *return address* label.
- Include the *name and telephone number* of the person who knows the content of the package (requirement) with the return address.

Specimen collection and shipping supplies:

- Specimen collection and shipping supplies are available at no cost to surveillance sites.
- Please contact the WSLH Clinical Orders dept. at **800-862-1088** or email HMSpecimenreceivingclinicalordersstaff@slh.wisc.edu to order supplies.

Shipping arrangements:

- The WSLH has a courier contract with Purple Mountain Solutions (formerly Gold Cross) for shipment of specimens to the WSLH, with charges billed to the WSLH. **You are not required to ship via Purple Mountain unless you wish to have the transport charges billed to the WSLH.***
- Specimens will be picked up during regular working hours, but you must confirm the time with the Purple Mountain scheduler. Please call by noon for same day pick up.

- Specimens will be delivered to the WSLH the following day. **If you must ship on Fridays or on the day before a holiday, please include an extra frozen kool-pak.**
- All package preparation should be completed before the courier arrives.
- Contact Purple Mountain directly to arrange for a pick-up:

Call: 800-990-9668

Website: <https://purplemountainsolutions.com/>

Same day delivery may be available for specific high priority specimens. However, **pre-approval from WSLH is required by calling the Customer Service Dept. at 800-862-1013.**

***NOTE: This fee exempt courier account is for these surveillance specimens or other specimens specifically requested by WSLH. Fee exempt courier is not available for transport of unapproved or unrequested samples.**