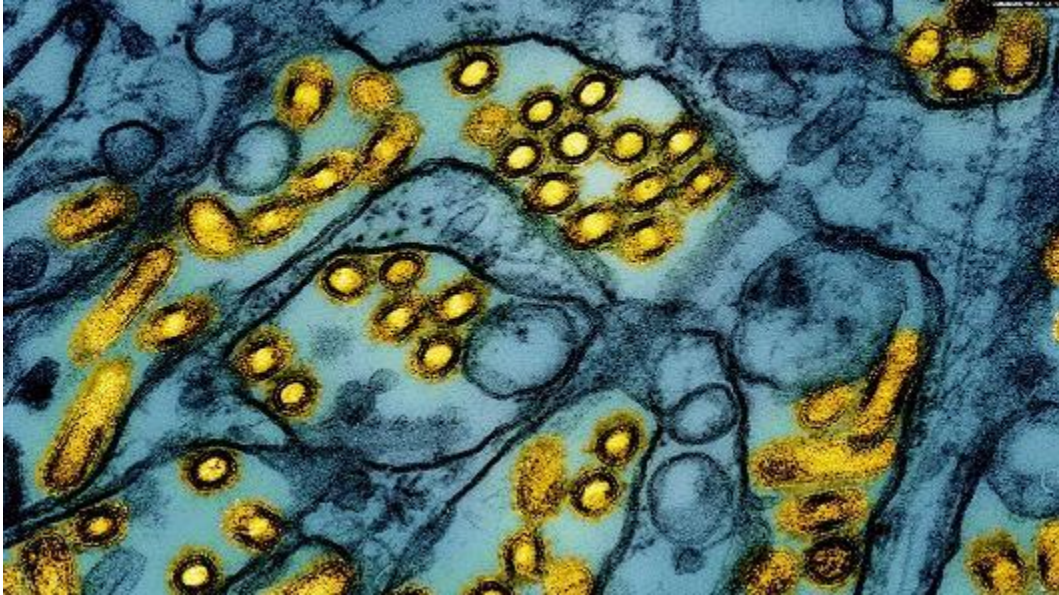


How Serious Is Bird Flu Outbreak?

今回は、アメリカで発生している鳥インフルエンザに関するニュースです。英語で「bird flu」とも呼ばれ、現在アメリカでは深刻な感染拡大が起きています。感染「infection」、感染拡大「outbreak」、感染者数「cases」などは、コロナ時代に日本でもよく耳にした言葉ですよね。ウイルスに関連した話題では頻繁に使われる単語なので、ぜひ覚えておきましょう。この時期、インフルエンザが流行している日本と同じく、世界ではどんなウイルスや健康被害が発生しているのか、そして人々がどのような対策を取っているのかについて、レッスンで話してみましよう。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

California officials have declared a state of emergency over the spread of bird flu. It is affecting milk cows in that state and causing illnesses in some people in other U.S. states.

The avian influenza virus, or bird flu, has spread among wild birds, farm birds and many mammal species.

The virus is known as Type A H5N1. It was identified for the first time in U.S. milk cows in March. Since then, bird flu has been found in about one third of U.S. states.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is following the number of cases and is reporting the latest details on its website. Most of the illnesses have been mild. Health officials said that one person in Louisiana was hospitalized with the nation's first known **severe** illness caused by the virus.

California Governor Gavin Newsom said he declared the state of emergency so state workers could take faster action.

California officials have been testing milk tanks. They said they have found the virus in hundreds of [herds](#). The virus was recently found in Southern California dairy farms. It was found in the state's Central Valley in August.

What is the risk to the general public?

Officials with the CDC repeated that the public has a low risk of getting the virus. There are no reports of person-to-person [infection](#) and no signs that the virus has changed to spread easily among humans.

Flu experts say it is too soon to know how the situation will change. But some experts are worried because flu viruses are mutating all the time and small genetic changes could take place.

Are cases becoming more serious?

Health officials said the first known case of severe illness in the U.S. was found in a patient in Louisiana. The person is older than 65 and has other medical problems. Officials said the person showed severe breathing problems after being near a group of sick birds. The CDC said that the Louisiana case is the first confirmed U.S. infection connected with backyard birds, or birds kept near a home.

Almost all the earlier infections in the U.S. have been in farmworkers dealing with infected dairy cattle or birds. In two cases — an adult in Missouri and a child in California — health officials have not learned how they became infected.

Angela Rasmussen is a virus expert at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. She said as more people become infected, more severe illnesses will be reported. Rasmussen said, "I assume that every H5N1 virus has the potential to be very severe and deadly.

"The World Health Organization says on its website that from 2003 to November 2024 about 142 people died from the H5N1 virus around the world. Most of the deaths were in Southeast Asia.

How can people protect themselves?

People who have contact with dairy cows, commercial poultry or with backyard birds are at higher risk than other people. CDC and other experts said those people should use breathing, eye, and hand protection, especially if the animals appear ill or if they die.

The CDC said in July that it would buy \$5 million in vaccines for farmworkers to protect against seasonal flu. If someone becomes infected with two flu types at the same time, it might permit the bird flu virus to mutate and to become more dangerous.

How else is bird flu spread?

The H5N1 virus can also be spread in [raw](#), or unpasteurized, milk. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration says [pasteurized](#) milk is safe to drink because the heat treatment kills the virus.

But high levels of the virus have been found in unpasteurized milk. Health officials urge people to avoid drinking raw milk. It can spread other germs in addition to bird flu.

The U.S. Agriculture Department has increased its testing of raw milk across the country to identify and contain avian flu. Federal officials ordered milk testing which began this month in 13 states.

I'm Anna Matteo.

Jonel Aleccia reported this story for the Associated Press. Jill Robbins adapted it for Learning English.

Source: [How Serious Is Bird Flu Outbreak?](#)

[VOA](#)

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. severe (adj.) very bad; extreme

A severe storm passed through the city last summer and caused a lot of damage.

2. herd (n.) a group of grazing animals, such as cows or sheep

A herd of deer were walking slowly through the field, snacking on blades of grass.

3. infection (n.) getting or having a sickness from bacteria or a virus

You can prevent an infection from a cut if you wash carefully and put on a bandage.

4. raw (adj.) not cooked

Eating raw beef can be dangerous.

5. pasteurized (adj.) heated to a high enough temperature to kill all bacteria

This cheese is made from pasteurized milk.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. How big is the risk of the bird flu to the public?
2. Who are the people most often infected by the virus?
3. What do the CDC and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommend doing to prevent getting infected?
4. How might modern farming methods make it easy for the bird flu to spread?
5. What things do you do to prevent from catching a cold or the flu?