



Best Practices for Handling Milk at Fairs and Exhibitions



H5N1 Influenza A virus in cattle is an emerging health issue, particularly in lactating dairy cows. While clinical signs are relatively mild in cattle, the virus can have significant health and financial impacts on other species, especially poultry, and minimizing spread is key to reducing these impacts. Fairs and exhibitions that host events with lactating dairy cows should be especially cautious in their handling of milk collected from cattle to minimize the potential for spreading the virus, either to other animals or into the environment.

Fairs and exhibitions may have unique circumstances and varying abilities to implement the best control, biosecurity, and disposal procedures. Each event or organization should review their individual environment and milking procedures to identify their own risk factors and challenges. Each exhibition should use the highest level of control that they can effectively implement to ensure exhibitor compliance and minimize disease transmission.

The following best practices are highly recommended for every event. At a minimum, each exhibition must follow all state and federal requirements for handling and managing animals and controlling disease.

- **Ensure milk collected at the event is from cattle that test negative for H5N1 influenza:** Use testing protocols to ensure animals are not bringing the virus to the event. At a minimum, state, and federal testing protocols must be followed, and each event is encouraged to identify other potential measures that can be taken to ensure infected animals are not exhibited or housed on site. Sick animals should not be allowed at the event, and milk from sick animals must be held out of the human food supply and handled separately.
- **Send all saleable milk to a processing plant for pasteurization:** Whenever possible, milk collected from cattle at an exhibition should be sold to a processor for further pasteurization off site. This will limit the need to treat or handle larger quantities of waste milk on the event grounds and will minimize direct exposure of people, animals, and the environment to milk.

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- **Heat treat any waste milk collected on site prior to disposal:** Any milk obtained from cattle should be heat-treated (pasteurized) prior to disposal anywhere.
 - Small amounts can be pasteurized on-site using small scale pasteurization units, such as a calf milk pasteurizer.
 - If milk is not collected in bulk at the event, exhibitors should be required to contain all milk in sealed containers and discard at the farm of origin if pasteurization is not available at the event.
- **Limit the amount of direct contact humans and other species have with milk:** While activities such as “Milk a cow” are fun and educational for event attendees, they are also opportunities to spread the virus. Discourage participation in any milking activities by fair or event attendees. Supply handwashing stations and hand sanitizers near dairy exhibitors.
- **Write and implement a biosecurity and milk handling plan for the event:** This plan should address the handling of milk, lactating animals, and manure. It should also outline expectations for milking animals with shared equipment and cleaning expectations. By having a plan, the event will create a consistent standard for all exhibitors and can communicate these standards to anyone considering attendance. Most importantly, the plan helps ensure all possible scenarios have been considered, creates clear expectations for participants, and can clearly outline consequences for not following the requirements.

To obtain additional resources and assistance in creating a milk management plan for your event, please contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture at 651-201-6700 or Mooving.Milk.MDA@state.mn.us