

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington D.C., 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

As Members representing the Central Valley of California, we write to express our appreciation for the ongoing collaboration between United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) towards combatting H5N1, or bird flu. The spread of this virus continues to pose a threat to our nation's protein supply chain and agriculture industry across the nation. Combating this virus will continue to require a united front. The nonstop work by our dedicated researchers and veterinarians throughout the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) continues to demonstrate tangible results, presenting opportunities to take further action.

The State of California is ground zero for conducting research to understand the impacts of this disease. It is only in 2025 that our constituents are starting to emerge from the most devastating outbreak of bird flu in poultry and livestock in our nation's history. Our producers, both dairy and poultry, are in unison and prepared to enhance readiness to avoid another 2024-2025-style outbreak. As our producers continue to monitor the situation, research has shown the longer the virus circulates in dairies without additional mitigation, there could be devastating impacts on dairy cattle, and the stakes will continue to rise on impacts to beef cattle.

We appreciate the continued progress on USDA's Five-Pronged Strategy, and we encourage USDA to also prioritize the important work that must be completed before adding dairy vaccination for H5N1 as a food defense option in the United States. Dairy vaccination may be the most effective way to protect cattle and consequently protect poultry in many regions of the country, including California. Creating and sustaining dairy herd immunity will lessen the amount virus generated by infected cows without the negative impacts of disease. We know that H5N1 disease impacts are severe for dairy cows without any immunity, but when the virus spreads from cows to poultry, the impacts are catastrophic. Poultry biosecurity is a critical tool within the Five-Pronged Strategy, however without sustained dairy herd immunity, infected cows may continue to exponentially generate high viral loads in environments often surrounding poultry flocks, rendering the best biosecurity ineffective. The unknowns around wild birds and other mechanisms of viral spread remain as research continues, but many suspected disease vectors know no boundaries, making the potential for reintroduction or spread to unaffected flocks and herds a significant risk. Finally, dairy cattle and calves must move between farms and often across state lines daily to optimize care and sustain food production, and the risk of spreading virus with these movements will be reduced if sufficient numbers of dairy cows have some level of immunity to H5N1 via a vaccine option.

As Members of Congress representing the Central Valley of California, we support the unified message from our dairy, poultry, and livestock constituents in urging USDA to take a cautious approach towards an avian influenza H5N1 vaccine for dairy cattle, but with continued research and development support toward creation of a vaccine. We additionally support continued dedication of resources towards cooperative agreements between the state and federal government for human and animal health.

It is critical as well that our trading partners are kept apprised should any action be taken as California's dairy industry provides 20% of our nation's milk supply and exports \$3.2 billion in dairy products. Thank you for your consideration of this letter and we stand ready to work with you on this important health and food security matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Costa".

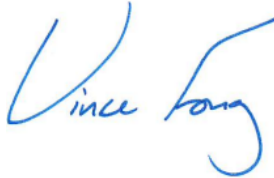
JIM COSTA  
Member of Congress

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DAVID VALADAO  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Harder".

JOSH HARDER  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vince Fong".

VINCE FONG  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam Gray".

ADAM GRAY  
Member of Congress