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## To Stop Bird Flu, Michigan Must Protect Farmworkers

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Experts are sounding the alarm: Michigan is “ground zero” for the bird flu crisis in the United States. H5N1, as the strain is officially known, is a highly contagious form of avian influenza that has been spreading in chickens and turkeys for years and recently made the jump to cows and other mammals – including humans.

In early June, Michigan Public reported that farmworkers in Michigan are increasingly exposed to H5N1 bird flu, including a new strain causing respiratory symptoms. This means the virus may begin spreading from person to person through coughs or sneezes.

And policies that leave farmworkers behind are putting Michiganders – and the whole country – at risk.

There is evidence that bird flu is already spreading from person to person. A patient in Mexico City, who had not been in direct contact with farm animals, recently died after contracting bird flu while hospitalized for other conditions. Though health authorities believe he died from co-morbidities, his death suggests that, like COVID-19, bird flu may be spreading in the general population and that people with chronic health problems may be at increased risk for death.