Second bird flu strain found in US dairy cattle, USDA says

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[1/2] A cow is hooked up to a milking machine during a milking demonstration at the state fair in West Allis, Wisconsin, U.S., August 9, 2024.. REUTERS/Jim Vondruska/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

Summary **Companies**

Second bird flu strain detected in dairy cattle for first time

Detection came through national milk testing program

Containment is critical, veterinary expert says

Feb 5 (Reuters) - U.S. dairy cattle tested positive for a strain of bird flu that previously had not been

seen in cows, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said on Wednesday, ramping up concerns about the persistent spread of the virus.

The H5N1 virus has reduced milk output in cattle, pushed up egg prices by wiping out millions of hens, and infected nearly 70 people since April as it has spread across the country.

Genome sequencing of milk from Nevada identified the different strain, known as the D1.1 genotype, in dairy cows for the first time, the USDA said. Previously, all 957 bird flu infections among dairy herds reported since last March had been caused by another strain, the B3.13 genotype, according to the agency.

Reuters reported news of the detection of the second strain on Wednesday ahead of USDA's announcement.

The second strain was the predominant genotype among wild birds this past fall and winter and has also been found in poultry, the USDA said. It was identified in dairy cattle through an agency program that began testing milk for bird flu in December.

"We're seeing the H5N1 virus itself be smarter than all of us," said Beth Thompson, South Dakota's state veterinarian.

"It's modifying itself so it's not just staying in the poultry and the wild waterfowl. It's picking up a