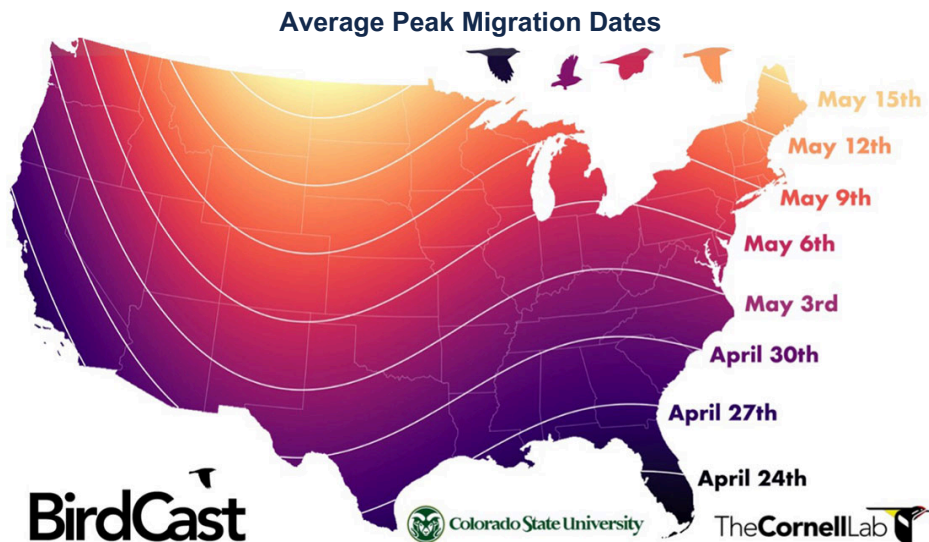


February 21, 2025

Key Takeaways

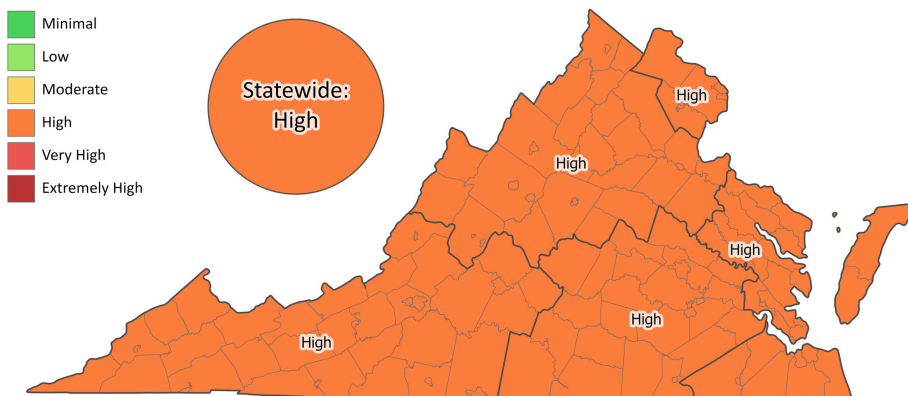
- Severe weather including winter storms, excessive rain, floods, extreme cold, winds and ice over the past two weeks is expected to ease next week.
- Southwest Virginia experienced its fifth major flooding event of the last five years.
- The USDA plans to end the mass culling of infected poultry flocks.
- A third spillover of H5N1 was detected in dairy cattle.
- Wyoming's first H5N1 patient is nation's third to be hospitalized.
- The Ebola and Marburg outbreaks in east Africa are winding down.
- Flu activity remains highly elevated in Virginia but is declining.

Key Figures



Spring migration season will peak in Virginia around the start of May, increasing the risk of H5N1 flu spillovers. Image Source: [BirdCast](#).

Respiratory Illness Activity Levels – Week ending Feb 15, 2025



Unchanged: Respiratory illness activity remains 'High' statewide as well as in each individual health planning region. Data source: [VDH](#).

Mpox

40

The number of clade I mpox cases reported outside of Africa as of Feb 20.

Seasonal Illness

5

Number of Virginia's five regions at 'High' or higher respiratory illness activity levels for the week ending Feb 15.

HPAI A(H5N1)

69

Human HPAI A(H5N1) cases in the United States as of Feb 20.

March 1

The start of Spring bird migration season in North America.

Foodborne

1,400

Number of people nationally that became ill during foodborne outbreaks in 2024.

Spotlight: Severe Weather

Ongoing Monitored Situations

Avian Influenza

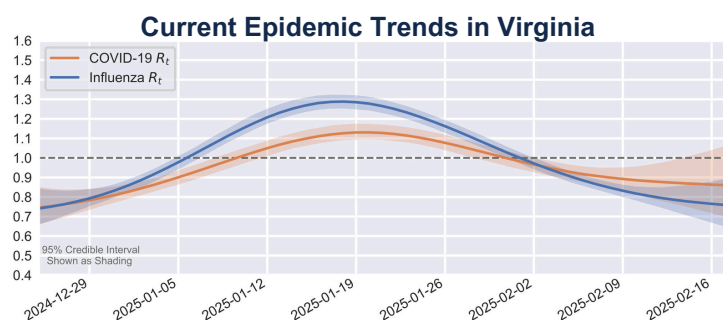
- **The USDA plans to end mass culling infected flocks.** The new avian flu control strategy will focus on medication, containment and vaccination. On Feb 13, the USDA conditionally approved an H5 vaccine for use in commercial poultry.
- **USDA detects third spillover event in cattle.** Milk testing in Arizona detected a herd infected with the D1.1 genotype H5N1. The case is thought to be unrelated to the D1.1 infections in Nevada cattle. If confirmed, this is the third introduction of H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b to cattle in the last year.
- **Spring bird migration season starts March 1.** The season runs through June 15, and activity in Virginia will peak around the start of May. The surge of wild birds will increase the risk of H5N1 spillovers to livestock and people.
- **Wyoming reports its first human case.** The patient, an elderly woman with comorbidities in Platte County, became the third to be hospitalized for an H5N1 infection. The woman owned a backyard flock of chickens that was also infected.
- **California lab scientists to strike.** Workers at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Lab will strike briefly next week. It is the sole laboratory in the state that confirms H5N1 cases.
- **H5N1 detected among cats of dairy workers.** Two indoor-only cats owned by dairy workers were found to have H5N1 after displaying respiratory symptoms. The workers refused to be tested. The owners did not indicate if the cats ate raw pet food, which continues to be a source of H5N1 infections.
- **H5N1 found in Californian rats.** APHIS detected four infected black rats in Riverside County. This is the first known report of H5N1 in rats.

Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers

- **Ebola outbreak in Uganda now contained.** The Minister of Health declared the outbreak contained after all patients receiving treatment recovered.
- **Marburg outbreak in Tanzania winding down.** The tenth of ten suspected and confirmed cases has died since last report, but all 281 contacts under monitoring have completed their 21-day follow-up without any new cases being reported.

Seasonal Illness

- **Respiratory illness activity is high in Virginia but trending downward.** Driven by flu, national respiratory illness activity remains high. National test positivity for flu continues to increase, though COVID-19 and RSV activity are decreasing.
- **Flu activity in Virginia is elevated but declining.** Diagnosed flu currently represents 9.6% of all emergency department (ED) visits. Though this is one of the highest rates recorded since March of 2020, it is down from 11.0% last week. Children continue to be most affected, though the decline in activity was seen across all age groups. Virginia's estimated effective reproduction rate (R_t) for flu is 0.75, suggesting a continued decline in activity.
- **COVID-19 activity remains 'stable' in Virginia.** ED diagnoses have remained static at 1.3% since the start of February. Epidemic models estimate an $R_t = 0.86$ suggesting a slow decline in activity.



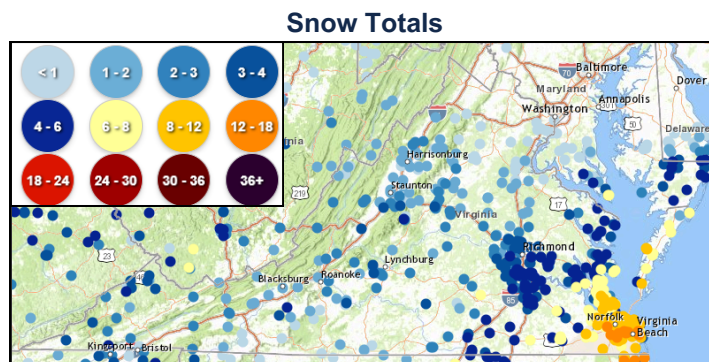
Models continue to forecast a decline in both flu and COVID-19 in the coming weeks. Data source: CDC.

- **RSV is stable in Virginia.** ED diagnoses have hovered around 0.3% since the start of February. Children aged 0-4 continue to make up the majority of all ED visits for RSV in Virginia.
- **Gastrointestinal illness activity in Virginia remains elevated.** ED and urgent care (UC) visits for gastrointestinal illnesses have declined for two weeks but remain above threshold in all five regions. Norovirus test positivity in Census Region 3 remains near a 24-month high.
- **HCOV activity is elevated and increasing.** Test positivity for human coronaviruses (not including SARS-CoV-2) in HHS region 3 have been steadily increasing since mid-November. Rates are now at the highest level seen since February of 2024.

Spotlight

- For the second week in a row, **severe weather affected Virginia**. Two snow events blanketed much of the state, with snow totals exceeding 12 inches in some areas. In between, high winds and ice caused widespread power outages and excessive rain led to catastrophic flooding in parts of Southwest Virginia.
- **Flooding occurred across Southwest Virginia**, including in areas still recovering from Tropical Cyclone Helene. Responders conducted over 150 swift-water rescue operations, and over 270 road closures were reported. Over 29,000 customers were under a boil water advisory. The Governor's Office submitted an Expedited Major Disaster Declaration request to federal partners.
- **Fifty-two residents were evacuated from a Tennessee nursing home**. Critical patients were evacuated first, while the rest were evacuated to a high school due to rapidly rising floodwaters.
- **Among other impacts**, Virginia State Police responded to over 1,500 crashes across the two winter storms. Richmond closed its Dock Street flood wall due to rising waters in the James River, and the Department of Health closed shellfish harvesting to portions of the river.

Severe Weather

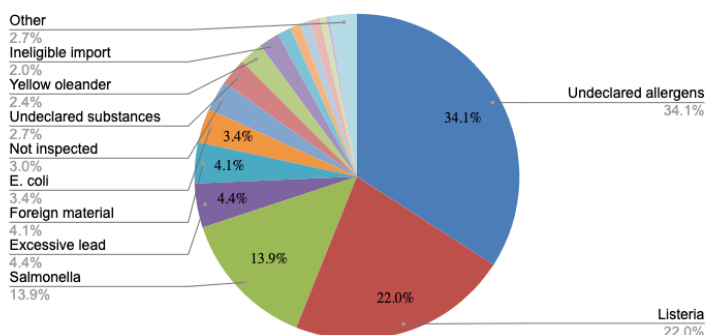


The Hampton Roads area and the Eastern Shore had the highest snow totals in this week's event, with reported accumulations exceeding six inches across the area, and exceeding 12 inches in some spots.
Image source: [NWS](#).

Other News

REASONS FOR FOOD RECALLS IN 2024 (FDA & USDA)

Recalls from undeclared allergens dropped, while recalls from Listeria and Salmonella increased.



An estimated 98% of illness due to contaminated food was attributed to only 13 total outbreaks in 2024. Listeria, Salmonella, or pathogenic E. coli were responsible for 12 of the 13 reported outbreaks. Image Source: [USPIRG](#).

- A pipeline **spilled over 2,100 gallons of fuel into the Elizabeth River last Friday**. Though the spilled product is harmful to humans and animals, responders isolated the spill to an uninhabited industrial shoreline.
- **Ransomware cyberattacks targeting medical organizations increased 32% in 2024**, according to an industry report. One in ten ransomware incidents occurs at healthcare organizations, the third most targeted sector.
- **Illnesses associated with contaminated food rose in 2024, and severe cases doubled**. While food recalls in the U.S. declined overall in 2024, hospitalizations increased from 230 in 2023 to 487 in 2024, and deaths increased from eight to 19.
- **The measles outbreak in Texas has increased to 90 confirmed cases**. The majority of cases remain concentrated in Gaines County. Additional cases have been reported in neighboring counties. Sixteen people have been hospitalized. Measles cases have also been reported recently in New Mexico and New Jersey.

- **A water main break in southwest Detroit caused severe residential flooding over the weekend**. Water levels were reported to be as high as two feet above sidewalk level during peak flooding, partially submerging basements and street-parked vehicles. Some residents may not be able to return home for weeks.