

Avian influenza in commercial poultry



H5 bird flu (H5N1 avian influenza clade 2.3.4.4b) is a contagious viral disease that can affect domestic and wild birds. It causes severe clinical signs and high mortality rates in birds.

The latest information is on the [webpage](#).

MPI is working closely with your industry bodies to support both the poultry sector and individual operators to be prepared for H5 bird flu and other strains of avian influenza. We want to make sure you know how to protect your poultry farm, contain any spread, and keep yourself and your flock safe.

Chicken and eggs are an important food source for New Zealanders, so it's vital that we work together to ensure domestic supply is maintained and that New Zealanders understand chicken and eggs, as well as products that contain them, remain safe to eat.

About H5 bird flu

H5 bird flu causes high mortality in poultry (chickens, turkeys, quail and pheasants), and waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans).

How to protect your flocks from H5 bird flu

The implementation of rigorous on-farm biosecurity has the potential to protect individual farms from infection and to limit impacts on the domestic supply of poultry meat and eggs.

Wild birds and their faeces are the greatest risk for introduction of H5 bird flu, so keeping your flocks away from wild birds and wild bird faeces is the critical measure to reduce risk.

Poultry can get infected if they mix with wild birds (direct contact) or are exposed to wild bird faeces, feathers or carcasses (indirect contact). Feed, water, bedding, housing or equipment can be contaminated by direct or indirect contact.

If you haven't already, we recommend developing business continuity or contingency plans, and reviewing your biosecurity to ensure you're taking all necessary steps to protect your commercial flocks.

Limit visitors to your operation to necessary people only

- Restrict their access to houses, sheds and other bird areas.
- Require visitors to put on clean protective clothing and use footbaths before entering areas with birds.
- Require a stand-down period between visits to different farms.
- Keep a detailed record of visitors and their contact details.



Avoid contact between your birds and wild birds

- Keep bird enclosures and poultry houses secure from entry by wild birds – net any access points, including vents, to prevent entry where possible.
- Restrict poultry access to areas where they may mix with wild birds, including open ponds, lakes, and creeks.
- Clean up surrounding areas to reduce shelter and hiding places for wild birds.
- Clean up any feed spills.
- Use bird scarers, spikes, and lasers to keep wild birds away.
- Remove any standing water that might attract birds.

Don't let feed and water become contaminated

- Ensure water supplied to poultry is from a chlorinated mains water supply, a microbiologically clean bore, or treated with chlorine if these sources aren't available.
- Store feed in a secure container so wild birds or pest animals can't contaminate it.

Keep your sheds, equipment and yards clean

- Stop any entry of water to poultry houses, especially water from the roof that may have been contaminated by wild bird faeces.
- Clean areas outside of sheds regularly.
- Remove litter, sand, and grit between batches of birds and every few months for resident birds.



- Thoroughly clean and disinfect floors, walls and aviary wire, particularly around entrance ways.
- Clean and disinfect feed and water containers regularly.
- Keep feed and water inside to avoid attracting wild birds.
- Don't share equipment with other birdkeepers or farms unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Maintain good hygiene

- Have good hygiene practices before and after handling birds – this includes hand washing and sanitising.
- Sanitise boots between sheds or flocks, or if possible, have different coloured boots to wear outside and inside each of your sheds, or between flocks.
- Best practice is to wear PPE and change it between sheds. Use foot baths between sheds.

Isolate or separate new birds

- Separate and monitor new birds for at least 30 days before introducing them to your existing flock – separation reduces the risk of transfer of virus within your farm facility.
- Always source new birds from a reputable producer or a breeder whose bird health status is known.
- Feed quarantined new birds and clean their shed and any equipment used after you have tended to other birds.

Food safety

H5 bird flu is sensitive to heat treatment, meaning that thoroughly cooked food is safe to eat.

There is no evidence that eggs or chicken meat, or foods that contain them, are routes of infection of humans for avian influenza, provided they are thoroughly cooked.

Look out for signs of H5 bird flu

The most obvious sign is the death of multiple birds within a flock, in a short timeframe. As well as sudden mortality, signs for H5 bird flu in poultry (chickens and turkeys) can include:

- lethargy or a reluctance to move
- reduced appetite
- droopy head, paralysis, or incoordination (neurological signs)
- darkened or swollen face, comb, or wattle ("cyanosis") from lack of oxygen
- coughing, panting, and nasal secretions

- unexpected drop in egg production
- bruising or haemorrhages
- severe diarrhoea
- a silent or "too quiet" poultry shed.

In domesticated waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, H5 bird flu generally has lower mortality, so it is harder to detect. Signs are usually similar to poultry but can be less severe and slower to progress:

- weak neck and lack of co-ordination
- blindness
- trembling.

Reporting bird flu

If you see three or more sick or dead wild birds in a group, avoid contact, record what you see and report it to the exotic pest and disease hotline on 0800 80 99 66 from anywhere in New Zealand. You can also report online at report.mpi.govt.nz. Do not handle the birds.

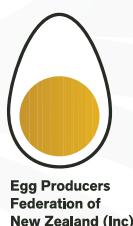
If you report online, select the 'dead or dying wild birds' option from the dropdown list and then the type of bird you have found.

Do not handle or move the birds.

Provide as much detail as you can, including:

- common name or species of sick or dead bird if known
- how many are sick or freshly dead, and the total number of birds present
- a GPS reading or other precise location information
- photographs and videos of sick and dead birds.

MPI will contact notifiers if more information is required.



For more information visit
www.mpi.govt.nz/hpai

