

19 June 2024

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER BULLETIN

Detection of avian influenza H7N8 in Greater Sydney, NSW

NSW Department of Primary Industries and CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) have confirmed the presence of high pathogenic avian influenza, serotype H7N8 in samples from a mixed barnyard and free-range commercial egg farm in Greater Sydney. The detection of the virus was confirmed by PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on Wednesday 19 June after ruling out other likely viral causes.

This is the first detection on avian influenza in NSW since 2013. All three previous detections of avian influenza in NSW have been successfully eradicated.

There is no known connection to the Greater Sydney case and the current Victorian H7N3 HPAI outbreak.

In addition, the H7N8 strain detected in Greater Sydney is not the same as the globally circulating H5N1 strain that is causing mass poultry and wildlife mortalities overseas.

Eggs and chicken meat remain safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked as per standard food handling practices.

The H7N8 avian influenza virus is not a risk to the public as it rarely affects humans unless there is direct and close contact with sick birds.

Avian influenza: clinical signs to look out for

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of poultry and occurs worldwide. Chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, quail, pheasants, emus and ostriches are among the more than 400 species that are susceptible to avian influenza. Many species of wild birds, including waterfowl and seabirds can also carry the virus.

The virus is mostly spread by wild birds, particularly ducks, contaminating food or water supplies. For this reason, the disease remains a constant biosecurity threat. Avian influenza can also spread by the movement of eggs, birds, people, vehicles and equipment between farms, and by clothing, footwear, aerosols, water, feed, litter, biting insects and vermin.

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by an influenza virus. Signs and symptoms include:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths
- Sudden decline in feed and/or water consumption
- Unusually quiet birds

- Unusually depressed birds
 - Decreased vocalisation
 - Any decline in egg production from normal to cessation
 - Sudden appearance of pale shell eggs or eggs without shells
 - Any birds with swollen heads/combs/wattles
 - Any birds with dark combs and wattles
 - Any birds with nervous signs e.g. head shaking, head and neck tremors, unsteady gait
 - Abnormal position of head and neck in a reasonable % of birds
 - Respiratory disease e.g. breathing difficulties, coughing, sneezing
 - Purplish patches on the legs and unfeathered skin
 - Watery diarrhoea
-

How to report symptoms

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease in NSW.

If you notice symptoms consistent with avian influenza, you must report it to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 or the Local Land Services on 1300 795 299 (during business hours).

Further Information

[NSW DPI Avian influenza](#)

[NSW DPI Notifiable pests and diseases](#)

[NSW DPI Emergency Animal Diseases: A guide for veterinarians](#)

[CSIRO Emergency animal diseases: A field guide for veterinarians](#)

[Ausvetplan- Avian influenza Version 5.2](#)

[Animal Health Australia- Avian influenza](#)

© State of New South Wales through Regional NSW 2024. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing June 2024. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Regional NSW or the user's independent adviser.
