

Avian Influenza Information for pet bird owners



High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) is a serious, highly contagious disease of birds. It is notifiable in Australia, meaning any suspected cases need to be reported immediately.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza (AI) commonly referred to as 'bird flu' is a viral infection of birds. The disease is caused by either high or low pathogenicity strains. HPAI can cause sudden high rates of illness or death in commercial poultry.

The HPAI H7N8 strain detected in NSW is not connected to the HPAI strains causing Victorian outbreak. Importantly, Australia remains free of the H5N1 strain that is causing concern globally.

There is a very low risk of people becoming infected with avian influenza viruses through normal contact with healthy birds.

What are the signs of HPAI in birds?

The clinical signs are extremely variable depending on many factors such as the type of bird, the virus subtype and the presence of other diseases.

Infected birds may die shortly after acquiring the infection with no obvious signs or they may show a variety of symptoms including:

- respiratory signs of coughing, sneezing or rasping breathing
- rapid drop in feed intake, water intake and egg production
- typical "sick bird" signs – ruffled feathers, depression, closed eyes



dpi.nsw.gov.au/ai



What do I do if I suspect HPAI in my pet bird?

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease in NSW. If you notice symptoms consistent with avian influenza, you must report it.

You can notify by phoning:

- your private veterinarian;
- the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888** (monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week); or
- your Local Land Services District Veterinarian on 1300 795 299. (business hours)

If suspect live birds or carcasses must be handled, precautions should be taken such as wearing personal protective equipment, including a facemask, eye protection, gloves, and coveralls. If a bird carcass needs to be moved (e.g., for submission for testing, or disposal), an inverted bag should be used to grasp the carcass before placing it in a secure bag.

Can I take my bird out of my home?

If you reside in an emergency zone, your bird must remain on your property.

- Where possible, house your pet birds indoors to minimise and potential contact with wild birds.
- HPAI can be spread by infected birds, on contaminated feed, bedding, manure, and on equipment, including boots.
- Wash your hands before and after handling your birds and secure your feed and bedding to avoid wild bird contamination.

What do I do if I have to take my pet bird to the vet?

- Check if you are in an emergency zone as you may need a permit, see www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/ai
- If you reside in the emergency zone and you are concerned about the health of your bird, **first**, call the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888 (monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**.
- Then call your vet practice to advise of the issue and that you would like to bring in your bird.



**EMERGENCY ANIMAL
DISEASE HOTLINE
1800 675 888**



How do I protect my birds?

Regardless of whether you are a commercial producer, you only keep a few chickens in your backyard or you own a pet bird, you need biosecurity practices in place to protect your birds from disease.

- Restrict contact between your birds and wild birds wherever you can.
- Always wash your hands before and after handling birds.
- Provide feed and water in the poultry shed or use equipment that restricts wild bird access.
- Provide domestic (chlorinated) water as the only water source.
- Keep your poultry sheds, yards and aviaries, and equipment, clean.
- Only buy healthy birds from reputable suppliers and always quarantine new birds before introducing them to the resident flock.
- Limit any visitors to your birds, and check if essential visitors have recently visited other premises where poultry are kept.
- Change into clean footwear before entering poultry houses or hen facilities, to stop the potential transfer of disease from outside.
- Keeping good records of bird movements or sales.
- Record and report unusual signs of disease.

Can the virus spread to people? How can I protect myself?

Transmission of avian influenza to humans is rare. Most people are not at risk of contracting avian influenza.

You may be at higher risk if you have had contact with birds that are infected with avian influenza, or their secretions (saliva, blood and faeces).

When handling sick birds or carcasses, wear appropriate personal protective equipment to reduce your risk of getting avian influenza. This includes a P2/N95 mask, goggles, gloves and protective clothing.

For more information on preventing avian influenza visit <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/avian-influenza>



Avian Influenza

High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) is a serious, highly contagious disease of birds. It is notifiable in Australia, meaning any suspected cases need to be reported to NSW DPI.

Stay alert and immediately report any sick or dead poultry or birds to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline in **1800 675 888**



HOW
ARE
YOUR
BIRDS

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respiratory signs of coughing, sneezing or rasping breathing



rapid drop in feed intake, water intake and egg production



typical “sick bird” signs – ruffled feathers, depression, closed eyes

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Scan the QR code for more information or to check if you're in an emergency zone

