



Protecting domestic poultry from avian influenza

INFORMATION SHEET

Avian influenza can spread directly to poultry from wild birds or from clothing, footwear, equipment or vehicles that have been contaminated by infectious birds. Be proactive and practice good biosecurity to help protect your flock from becoming infected.

The everyday threat of avian influenza exists silently in Australia in wild birds. If an avian influenza outbreak occurs the biosecurity measures described here are still relevant, but additional measures and regulatory restrictions may apply.

Protect Your Flock

1. Keep your equipment and poultry yard or aviary clean.

- Remove litter, sand and grit from the aviary between batches of birds, and every few months for resident birds.
- Thoroughly clean concrete floors, walls and aviary wire with soapy water, and disinfect as needed.
- Clean and disinfect feed and water containers regularly.
- Don't share equipment with other birdkeepers unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

2. Avoid contact between your birds and wild birds.

- Prevent contact with wild birds by restricting access to open ponds, lakes and creeks. Protective netting can also help prevent wild birds from entering domestic bird areas.
- Clean up surrounding areas to reduce shelter and hiding places for wild birds.

3. Don't let feed and water become contaminated by faeces or other animal waste.

- Ensure water supplied to birds is from a chlorinated mains water supply, a clean bore, or treated appropriately if these sources aren't available.
- Don't allow wild birds or pest animals to contaminate your birds' feed. Store it in a container with a secure lid.

4. Practice good hygiene when handling birds including at bird shows.

- Always thoroughly wash your hands with soap before and after handling birds.
- Clean your footwear and wash clothing regularly and avoid using the same clothing and footwear around your own birds if you have visited other flocks or events such as shows.
- Do not take any birds to a show if there are signs of illness in your flock.
- All bird equipment and permanent carrying containers should be cleaned and disinfected before and after a show.
- At the show, avoid handling birds other than your own, if possible.
- At home, show birds should always undergo a period of quarantine before returning to the flock.
- Keep a register of all bird movements in and out of your premises.

5. Limit visitors' access to your birds.

- Restrict access to bird areas.
- Ask visitors to wash hands, practice good hygiene, put on clean protective clothing and use footbaths containing appropriate disinfectants at the entrance to bird areas or sheds.
- Keep a record of visitors.

6. Quarantine new birds.

- Separate and monitor new birds for at least 30 days before introducing them to your existing flock.
- Always source birds from a reputable producer or breeder whose bird health status is known.
- Always buy healthy birds and avoid buying them from markets.
- Feed and clean quarantined birds after you have tended to other birds.

7. Know the signs of disease.

Signs of disease usually appear in several or all birds in a flock, including:

- sudden death
- lethargy or reluctance to walk, eat or drink
- droopy appearance or ruffled feathers
- head or limb swelling
- bruising of the wattle, comb, feet or skin
- respiratory signs such as panting, nasal discharge or sneezing



- diarrhoea
- unusual head or neck posture, incoordination, inability to walk or stand
- unusual reduction in egg production.

8. Immediately report any sick or dead birds.

- If you see sick or dead birds, call Biosecurity Tasmania or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888. This will put you in touch with your state or territory agriculture department during and outside normal working hours. Avian influenza is a notifiable animal disease. You must report a suspected outbreak.

Human Health

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

People should avoid direct contact with birds that are sick or have died unexpectedly and use good hygiene measures for handling and disposing of dead birds.

Eggs, poultry and game meat are safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked according to standard safe food handling practices.

While seasonal influenza (flu) immunisation will not protect against avian influenza, getting the flu vaccine each year can help prevent bird flu mixing with other flu viruses. It is recommended that everyone over 6 months of age has a flu vaccine each year.

Further Information

For more information visit:

- [Avian Influenza | Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania](#)
- [Bird flu \(avian influenza\) | Tasmanian Department of Health](#)

Biosecurity Tasmania Statewide: 03 6165 3777 / AnimalDisease.Enquiries@nre.tas.gov.au

Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (all hours): 1800 675 888



www.nre.tas.gov.au/ai

