

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA

Private veterinary practitioner preparedness toolkit

Guidance for Veterinary Practices

Importance of HPAI

High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) is a national emergency animal disease (EAD) notifiable in all Australian states and territories. H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b is a highly contagious variant of HPAI which is circulating globally causing severe illness and mortality in a wide range of bird species, with known transfer to mammals and zoonotic risk to humans. **H5N1 HPAI has been detected in Australia.**

First steps in a suspected case (wildlife or pet bird/backyard poultry)

BE AWARE AND PREPARED

Public Education: Phone Triage Checklist

For WILDLIFE

1. AVOID:

Do not touch or move the bird to prevent disease spread.

2. RECORD:

Note time, date, location, and clinical signs.
Take photos/videos if safe, without handling.

3. REPORT:

Immediately contact the **Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Hotline (1800 675 888) (24/7 availability)** or go to **birdflu.gov.au** as required under federal and state/territory legislation (**note during an outbreak not all vets will be taking wildlife cases**)

For PET BIRDS and BACKYARD POULTRY

1. Be Aware:

All staff should be aware of clinical signs and practice good hygiene.

2. Calls from owners/ wildlife carers:

Discuss bird's history and clinical signs.
Biosecurity and Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures should be in place before presentation.

3. Isolate:

Inform owners to isolate any sick birds away from any others

CLINICAL SIGNS

For WILDLIFE

- Sudden death
- Lethargy, inappetence
- Respiratory distress (e.g., nasal discharge, dyspnoea)
- Neurological signs (e.g., tremors, ataxia, seizures)
- Gastrointestinal signs (e.g., vomiting, diarrhoea)
- Petechial haemorrhages

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- Reduced egg production
- Swelling/cyanosis of head or legs

BIOSECURITY AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES Checklist

Preparedness is essential, ensure robust biosecurity and infection prevention and control plans are in place to protect staff, clients, and animals.

HOW TO PREPARE

- ☐ **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE): Ensure you have in your practice**
 - disposable suits
 - gloves
 - boot covers
 - fit tested P2/N95 masks
 - goggles
- ☐ **Biosecurity:** Plan for any presented cases, set up a dedicated outside/separate room isolation area (with separate ventilation and away from cat areas). Ensure you have separate cleaning and disinfection equipment including biohazard waste bags, disposal facilities.
- ☐ **Staff:** Brief all staff on protocols and procedures for a potential outbreak. Education on appropriate clinical signs, triage, biosecurity, reporting and stand down times.

WHAT TO DO IF A SUSPECT CASE IS PRESENTED

- ☐ **Call EAD Hotline (1800 675 888) (24/7 availability) or go to birdflu.gov.au**
- ☐ **PPE: Use full PPE for all suspected cases.** (Practice hand hygiene, follow Don and Doff protocols).
- ☐ **Biosecurity:** Isolate outdoors or in a dedicated isolation room/area. Clean and disinfect equipment, surfaces after removing organic material (avoid using sprays to minimise aerosolisation). Place contaminated waste (organic and PPE) in a biohazard bag, secure with zip tie and perform hand hygiene. Ensure appropriate disposal.
- ☐ **Staff Management:** Designate staff for suspect cases, avoiding contact with other birds for 48hours post-exposure. **Seasonal flu vaccinations are recommended for staff. The vaccine does not protect against avian influenza and can reduce the risk of co-infection.**

Public Education: Instruct clients to phone before presenting birds. Use the phone triage checklist.
Place the following HPAI poster up in practice.

Resources:



Comprehensive resources are available on the **AVA HPAI webpage**. Use the QR code