

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:16:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:56 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:18 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>;
Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please see DAFF cleared media release on bird flu here - [2526-170 MO DRAFT MR - H5 WA.docx](#)

And media TPs and Q+A here - [MO TPs - H5 WA - 19 June.docx](#)

Thanks!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media
Public Affairs Officer

Communications and Media Branch

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

or media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:55:51 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:18 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>;
Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please see DAFF cleared media release on bird flu here - [2526-170 MO DRAFT MR - H5 WA.docx](#)

And media TPs and Q+A here - [MO TPs - H5 WA - 19 June.docx](#)

Thanks!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Public Affairs Officer

Communications and Media Branch

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

or media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:55:38 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:53 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Subject: FW: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) **Senior Adviser**
Office of Julie Collins MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:51 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>
Subject: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) See below.

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia.

Initial testing at DPIRD's laboratory has returned a suspected positive result for avian influenza. Samples have been sent to CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing, with results expected tomorrow.

We cannot confirm yet whether it is the strain of concern circulating at this stage, known as H5 bird flu.

There is no evidence of any mass mortality at this time, nor any evidence of infection in poultry.

WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate a response with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A key message for everyone is please do not touch sick or dead birds or animals. If you see multiple sick or dead birds or

other animals, take photos or a video from a safe distance. Record your location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I want everyone to know this is what we've been preparing for. We've undertaken a series of national exercises and invested \$113m to strengthen our nations preparedness for H5 bird flu, including an additional \$11.2m in the recent 2026-2027 Budget.

If confirmed to be H5 bird flu this will be sobering but not unexpected given the spread globally.

I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

B.

Dr Brant Smith BVSc, MVPHMgt, MAICD
First Assistant Secretary | Biosecurity Animal Division
National Animal Disease Preparedness Coordinator
Mental Health Champion

s 47F(1) Executive Assistant: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
70 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601
GPO Box 858, Canberra City ACT 2601
daff.gov.au biosecurity.gov.au



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Supporting Flexibility - if you receive an email from me outside of normal business hours, I'm sending it at a time that suits me. Unless it's marked urgent, I'm not expecting you to read or reply until normal business hours.

OFFICIAL

From: [Lowe, Matt](#)
To: [Minister Collins](#); julie.collins.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: [Benson, Stuart](#); **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** [Anderson, Victoria](#); [Collins, Monica](#); [Cookson, Beth](#); **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:18:22 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Minister,

Further to advice from CVO Beth Cookson below, **key points** to note at this stage are:

- One wildlife vagrant bird (Brown Skua) **has tested positive to H5 Influenza A in a WA laboratory**. This bird has died and a second bird (Petrel) has been taken into care, showing similar symptoms (testing results pending).
- Samples will be provided to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) for confirmatory testing.
- If confirmed, this will be the first positive case of H5 HPAI in Australia, and the implication is that the disease has an arrival pathway in Australia.
- Further testing will confirm if it is the Highly Pathogenetic variety, and if it is the clade that is known to be impacting wild birds around the globe.

Next steps

- WA will lead the response.
- If ACDP testing confirms, the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) will be convened to notify them of the report.
- A surveillance plan will need to be implemented.
- We will work with you and your office to advise media and community, with a call to the public to report any sick wildlife.

Will update you further as information becomes available.

Matt Lowe (he/him)

Acting Secretary

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Policy Group

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Email: matt.lowe@aff.gov.au

Ph: **s 47F(1)**

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

From: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 8:21 PM

To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren <Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>

Cc: **s 47E(d)**

Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Dear all

- I was advised earlier this evening by the WA CVO of a single vagrant skua (species of seabird with known distribution through subantarctic) east of Esperance that has tested positive at WA DPIRD laboratory for H5 Influenza A. The skua was found sick on 14/6 with clinical signs of leg paralysis, weakness and dehydration. It subsequently died overnight after being treated in isolation at Esperance wildlife centre.
- A sick petrel, also with a distribution to subantarctic has also been taken into care at the same wildlife hospital and tested. Preliminary results tomorrow.
- Samples from the skua are en route to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing.
- There are no other reported sick birds or other animals in the vicinity. It is possible that individual infected animals can arrive and not establish infection in local populations, however if confirmed, would raise concern about active pathways.
- Petrels and skuas are known to arrive periodically as vagrant species, any onward spread (if confirmed) is undetermined at this stage.

Next steps

- ACDP need to complete a series of tests before confirmation of the strain of Influenza A will be known.
 - Samples should arrive from WA tomorrow morning. If this happens as expected, we should have preliminary test results from ACDP by early afternoon tomorrow confirming whether test positive for H5 Influenza A. We will not have confirmation of the strain being high pathogenicity and the clade of concern for another 24-28 hours following this, however I would treat it as highly suspicious that it is the H5 strain of concern given the species and location if ACDP confirm the WA lab results of H5 positive.
- I will work with the WA CVO on the timing for the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease to meet which is the next step. It is likely this will occur after the test results from ACDP are received tomorrow.
- Industry have not been advised. We will do this as part of the CCEAD meeting requests, following ACDP preliminary test results.

I will keep you informed as we have new information. **s 47B(a)**

We'll

prepare media holding lines, if needed.

Beth.

Dr Beth Cookson BVSc (Hons), EMPA, MANZCVS (Epidemiology)

Chief Veterinary Officer

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

T. **s 47F(1)** . beth.cookson@aff.gov.au

agriculture.gov.au



OFFICIAL

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From: s 47E(d)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Daily Briefing
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 5:52:46 AM

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

KEY PORTFOLIO ARTICLES

- [ABC News](#) and many other outlets report that research has revealed the devastating impact of bird flu on the Australian territory of Heard Island, located 4,000 kilometres south-west of mainland Australia, where more than 13,000 baby seals are now believed to have been killed by the virus. While the mainland remains free of the virus, researchers warn it could have devastating impacts on wildlife as it spreads to new areas.

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Biosecurity & Compliance

(14 items)



Funding boost after 13,000 seal pups die

The Mercury By Duncan Abey

Friday 19 June 2026, 12:00am AEST - Page 8

Australia will inject an extra \$11m into national bird flu preparedness after Tasmanian scientists confirmed the deaths of 13,000 elephant seal pups, as well as hundreds of penguins and seabirds, on remote sub-Antarctic Heard Island. The investigation into H5 avian...

Keywords: Australia (2), bird flu (2), investigation (1), H5 (2), Australia's (1), Australian (2), technology (1), H5 bird flu (1), Commonwealth (1)

[VIEW PDF](#) [VIEW TEXT](#)



'Sobering': flu strain kills thousands of seal pups

The West Australian By Ethan James

Thursday 18 June 2026, 1:26pm AWST

A devastating strain of bird flu has wiped out more than 75 per cent of the southern elephant seal pup population on a remote sub-Antarctic island.

Keywords: bird flu (1), H5 bird flu (2), Australia's (1), Australia (3), animal (1), Australian (2), research (1), federal government (1), outbreak (1), agriculture industry (1)

[VIEW ONLINE](#)

<!--[endif]--> **SYNDICATIONS**

Albany Advertiser, Augusta Margaret River Times, Broome Advertiser, Countryman, Harvey-Waroona Reporter, Narrogin Observer, North West Telegraph, PerthNow, Sound Telegraph, South Western Times, The Geraldton Guardian, The Kimberly Echo



Thousands of seals wiped out by deadly bird flu outbreak on Australian islands

The West Australian By David Hannant

Thursday 18 June 2026, 11:53am AWST

More than 13,000 baby seals have been wiped out across two Antarctic Australian islands, scientists have discovered.

Keywords: bird flu outbreak (1), Australian (12), outbreak (6), H5 bird flu (2), bird flu (4), report (1), dead (1)

VIEW ONLINE

<!--[endif]--> **SYNDICATIONS**

Albany Advertiser, Augusta Margaret River Times, Broome Advertiser, Countryman, Great Southern Herald, Harvey-Waroona Reporter, Kalgoorlie Miner, Midwest Times, Narrogin Observer, North West Telegraph, Pilbara News, Sound Telegraph, South Western Times, The Geraldton Guardian, The Kimberly Echo

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



Thousands of baby seals wiped out as bird flu infects population on Australian island

7 News By Hayley Taylor

Thursday 18 June 2026, 3:07pm AEST

More than 13,000 pups have died in the ongoing mass-casualty event.

Keywords: bird flu (5), Australian (5), death (1), research (2), H5 (1), Australia (1), animals (2), dead (2)

VIEW ONLINE



Bird flu kills 13,000 seal pups on Australia-controlled island, scientists estimate

nine.com.au By Emily Bennett

Thursday 18 June 2026, 7:04pm AEST

The H5N1 strain has wiped out 75 per cent of the population, according to new research.

Keywords: Bird flu (4), Australia (3), research (4), live (2), H5 bird flu (1)

VIEW ONLINE

Bird flu kills thousands of baby seals on Heard Island in Southern Ocean

ABC News By Jano Gibson

Thursday 18 June 2026, 9:25am AEST

Research has revealed the devastating impact of bird flu on a remote Australian territory where more than 13,000 baby seals are now believed to have been killed by the virus.

Keywords: Bird flu (6), H5 (2), dead (3), research (3), Australia (3), Australian (13), H5 bird flu (4), investigating bird flu (1), Australia's (1), report (3), outbreak (1), federal government (1)

VIEW ONLINE

More than 13,000 seal pups die on remote Australian island amid bird flu outbreak

The Guardian By Petra Stock

Thursday 18 June 2026, 2:51pm AEST

Testing confirms spread of deadly H5N1 virus on the subantarctic Heard Island, about 4,000km south-west of Perth

Keywords: Australian (7), bird flu outbreak (1), bird flu (3), Death (1), research (2), dead (2), H5 bird flu (2), federal government (1), Australia (2), report (1), animal (1)

VIEW ONLINE

Bird flu kills more than 75% of baby seals on remote Australian island, study finds

Yahoo! News By Lana Lam - Sydney

Thursday 18 June 2026, 1:20pm AEST

Scientists say 13,000 southern elephant seal pups on Heard Island have died of the H5N1 strain.

Keywords: Bird flu (7), Australian (3), Australia (4), research (5), alerted (1), dead (1), report (2), H5 bird flu (1)

VIEW ONLINE

<!--[endif]--> **SYNDICATIONS**

BBC News

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



TDT Hobart

10 News Plus 15 times a week 11:30pm to 12:00am

Thursday 18 June 2026, 11:43pm AEST

The h5 strain of bird flu has been linked to the deaths of around 13-thousand southern elephant seal pups on heard Island . That is, more than 3 quarters of the new born population.

Tasmanian based scientists from the australian antarctic Division say avian influenza has also killed hundreds of king Penguins in the same area. And hobart house prices are forecast to rise by 13 percent by the end of next year.

Keywords: h5 (1), bird flu (1), australian (1), prices (1)

PLAY NOW

SYNDICATIONS

TDT (Launceston)



ABC Adelaide

ABC Late News 5 times a week 10:56pm to 11:11pm

Thursday 18 June 2026, 11:10pm ACST

...time that strain was detected on an Australian territory. New analysis of aerial footage, combined with ground surveys, has revealed the full impact on southern elephant seal pups. Mortality was around 76%. And that equates to ver over 13,000 dead pups.

The devastating scenes on Heard Island highlight the potential impact on wildlife here in Australia, if and when the H5 strain of bird flu arrives.

Keywords: Australian (3), dead (1), Australia (1), H5 (1), bird flu (1)

PLAY NOW

SYNDICATIONS

ABC (Brisbane), ABC (Canberra), ABC (Darwin), ABC (Hobart), ABC (Melbourne), ABC (Sydney), ABC News (Australia)



ABC Perth Perth

PM with Samantha Donovan 5 times a week, 6:00pm to 6:30pm

Thursday 18 June 2026, 6:25pm

...the administrative burden on healthcare providers and patients, Catherine Gregory New research has revealed that bird flu has killed

thousands of baby elephant seals on a remote Australian territory, Scientists uncovered evidence that the dangerous H5,
Keywords: research (1), bird flu (1), Australian (1), H5 (1)

PLAY NOW

SYNDICATIONS

ABC [46 Syndications]



ABC Canberra Canberra

Nightlife with Philip Clark 4 times a week, 12:01am to 2:00am

Friday 19 June 2026, 1:04am

...respond, Wildlife vets say Australia must be prepared for the potential spread of bird flu after new research shows its devastating impact on baby seals on Heard Island, Scientists uncovered evidence that the dangerous H5 strain of bird flu had reached...

Keywords: Australia (1), bird flu (2), research (1), H5 (1)

PLAY NOW

SYNDICATIONS

ABC [40 Syndications]

[Back to Top](#)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:08:00 PM

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia.

Initial testing at DPIRD's laboratory has returned a suspected positive result for avian influenza. Samples have been sent to CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing, with results expected tomorrow.

We cannot confirm yet whether it is the strain of concern circulating at this stage, known as H5 bird flu.

There is no evidence of any mass mortality at this time, nor any evidence of infection in poultry.

WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate a response with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A key message for everyone is please do not touch sick or dead birds or animals. If you see multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, take photos or a video from a safe distance. Record your location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I want everyone to know this is what we've been preparing for. We've undertaken a series of national exercises and invested \$113m to strengthen our nations preparedness for H5 bird flu, including an additional \$11.2m in the recent 2026-2027 Budget.

If confirmed to be H5 bird flu this will be sobering but not unexpected given the spread globally.

I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Adviser

Julie Collins MP

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Member for Franklin

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: [Ag Media](#)
To: [Ag Media](#)
Subject: Media wrap: Friday 19 June [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 5:05:09 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

OFFICIAL



Friday 19 June

Media enquiries

Received today

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Biosecurity

- Radio National Breakfast, Grace Stranger – interview request with Dr Beth Cookson, request under consideration
- ABC Science, Peter de Kruijff – questions on species of bird/s involved in suspected H5N1 detections in WA, response underway
- 10 News Qld, Matthew Johnson – questions on whether H5N1 could be detected in Queensland, response underway

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Products delivered

Talking points

- H5 suspected detection (Collins)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Communication and Media Branch

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

s 22(1)(a)(ii) | E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s 47E(d)
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Morning News 19 Jun 2026
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 5:25:18 AM

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Funding boost after 13,000 seal pups die

Hobart Mercury, General News, 19/06/2026, Duncan Abey, Page 8

Australia will inject an extra \$11m into national bird flu preparedness after Tasmanian scientists confirmed the deaths of 13,000 elephant seal pups, as well as hundreds of penguins and seabirds, on remote sub-Antarctic Heard Island. [...] Environment Minister Murray Watt said the additional funding would support environmental preparedness, including invasive species control, habitat improvement and protection for offshore island breeding colonies, bringing total Commonwealth funding for bird flu preparedness to \$47m.

Also reported by: [Daily Mail Australia \(Online\)](#), [NEWS.com.au \(Online\)](#), [The New Daily \(Online\)](#)

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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

On the radar



Week of 22 June 2026

Minister Collins and Assistant Minister Chisholm

Headline items

Suspect H5 avian influenza - The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of H5 avian influenza in a single migratory wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia. Initial testing at DPIRD's laboratory has returned a suspected positive result for H5 avian influenza. Samples have been sent to CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing, with results expected **20 June 2026**. (Brant Smith, [s 47F\(1\)](#))

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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:09 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ag Media; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: AAD research now live [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Good morning s 22(1)(a)(ii) ,

Just letting you know the bird flu research has just gone live:

<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.64898/2026.06.16.732752v1>

DCCEEW also sent through the DOI link (preferred link for the MR):

<https://doi.org/10.64898/2026.06.16.732752>

Best wishes,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

(Please note I currently work Tuesday-Friday)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

s 22(1)(a)(ii) E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Wednesday, 17 June 2026 11:35 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ag Media; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: DRAFT MEDIA RELEASE AND TALKING POINTS: AAD announcement
[SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: Talking points and QA Heard Island HPAI.docx; 2606XX_-_WATT_COLLINS_-_H5
_Budget - v3.docx

OFFICIAL

Good morning s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please see fact checked media release and supporting talking points (as provided by DCCEEW and reviewed by the department) attached for your consideration.

Please let me know if you require anything further and happy to discuss.

Best wishes,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

(Please note I currently work Tuesday-Friday)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Communications and Media Branch

s 22(1)(a)(ii) E: media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL Sensitive

H5 avian influenza (bird flu) – Heard Island and McDonald Islands updated findings

Talking points

- The Australian Antarctic Program (AAP) completed two voyages to Heard Island and McDonald Islands (HIMI) in October 2025 and January 2026. These voyages included surveillance for H5 avian influenza (bird flu) as part of a broader science program.
- Detailed analysis of voyage data and drone imagery has now been completed and provides new information about the extent of the impacts.
- During the voyages, there were observations of unusual mortality in elephant seal pups on Heard Island, and H5 bird flu was later confirmed in samples collected from the southern elephant seal, Antarctic fur seal and gentoo penguin.
 - Further testing found H5 bird flu in a South Georgia diving petrel and in faecal samples from a king penguin and a brown skua. Faeces from a southern giant petrel and a macaroni penguin also tested positive for influenza, but H5 bird flu could not be confirmed in those samples.
- Over the two voyages, AAP scientists conducted ground searches covering 300 km, and 1,600 km of drone flights to better understand how the disease was affecting wildlife, including in areas that could not be reached on foot.
- Detailed analysis of voyage data and drone imagery was completed in May 2026 and this has sadly confirmed the scale of mortality in elephant seal pups at Heard Island.
 - Final survey results suggest around 76% of pups died on Heard Island, estimated to be more than 13,000.
 - Some adult elephant seals also died, but the total number across Heard Island is not known. In one surveyed area, 3% of females were found dead in October 2025
- Analysis also found impacts in other species, including elevated mortality in king penguins and to a lesser extent gentoo penguins; however, impacts were much lower (less than 1% of adults in affected areas). No unusual mortalities were seen in any other species.
- Suspected H5 bird flu impacts on McDonald Islands were also observed, with evidence of elephant seal pup mortality.
 - As McDonald Islands were only surveyed by drone and no on-ground sampling was undertaken, laboratory confirmation of H5 bird flu was not possible.
- Genetic analysis shows the virus detected on Heard Island is most closely related to viruses from the sub-Antarctic Crozet Islands, located around 1800 km away, suggesting it was the most likely source of introduction.
- While sobering, these findings are not unexpected. They are consistent with what is known about bird flu impacts and spread around the sub-Antarctic, and its transmission through direct contact between animals or shared environments.
- Experience overseas shows that there are few practical actions that can be taken in the natural environment to mitigate the impacts of H5 bird flu. Also given HIMI's extreme remoteness and harsh conditions, active control measures are not planned at this stage.
- Fortunately, wildlife on HIMI remains largely undisturbed. The islands are free of most invasive species, meaning the added threats of predation and ecosystem degradation are limited. The Australian Government strictly manages all human activities on HIMI.

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Risk to Australia

- Australia remains the only continent free from the highly contagious strain of bird flu.
- HIMI is located about 4000 km southwest of Perth and 1700 km north of Antarctica.
- The risk of H5 bird flu to Australia remains elevated as the virus continues to circulate globally with significant impacts on poultry industries, wildlife and communities overseas. However, H5 bird flu impacts on Heard Island do not substantially change the current elevated risk level for mainland Australia.
- This situation reinforces the importance of surveillance and preparedness on mainland Australia, which will continue as planned.
- The Australian Government has committed more than \$113 million to strengthen Australia's preparedness for H5 bird flu. This includes more than \$47 million for environment measures - \$11.2 million in the 2026-27 Budget.

Q&As

Updated findings

What are the final findings from the 2025-26 HIMI voyages?

- Detailed analysis of voyage data and drone imagery was finalised in May 2026, including data from 300 km of ground searches by AAP scientists and 120 drone flights covering 1,600 km across the two voyages.
- Analysis has confirmed widespread mortality in elephant seal pups across all breeding areas on Heard Island, with an estimated 13,359 deaths based on the 76% average mortality of pups born in 2025. This is likely an underestimate of total mortality, as it was evident from the observations made in January that mortality continued beyond October. One area suffered mortality in elephant seal pups up to 97%.
- Suspected H5 bird flu impacts on McDonald Islands were also observed, with evidence of elephant seal pup mortality. As McDonald Islands were only surveyed by drone and no on-ground sampling was undertaken, laboratory confirmation of H5 bird flu was not possible.
- Impacts in other species were also identified, including elevated mortality in king penguins and, to a lesser extent gentoo penguins; however, impacts were much lower (approximately less than 1% of adults in affected areas).
- No unusual mortalities were evident in any other species, including the endemic Heard Island shag and black-faced sheathbill, the threatened black-browed albatross, and Antarctic fur seal, despite detailed surveys of the main breeding areas.
- Further testing has found H5 bird flu in a South Georgia diving petrel and in faeces from a king penguin and a brown skua. Faeces from a southern giant petrel and a macaroni penguin also tested positive for influenza, but H5 bird flu could not be confirmed in those samples.

Were these findings expected?

- While sobering, the scale of impacts and the species affected are consistent with observations at other sub-Antarctic sites.
- Genetic analysis shows the virus detected on Heard Island is most closely related to viruses from the sub-Antarctic Crozet Islands, located around 1,800 km away, suggesting this is the most likely source of virus introduction shortly before the first voyage.

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Initial Voyage 1 and 2 findings

What was observed on Heard Island during voyage 1?

- Unusual levels of mortality in elephant seals were observed on Heard Island by scientists from the AAP in October 2025.
- There were no ground observations of unusual mortality in other species on the island, including penguins and other seabirds.

What H5 bird flu impacts were observed during the second voyage to HIMI?

- The second voyage arrived at Heard Island in late December 2025 and returned to Hobart in February.
- Further surveillance, sampling and wildlife monitoring was undertaken during this expedition. Samples were collected from a small number of dead seals and seabirds on the island.
- AAP scientists did not directly observe new large-scale wildlife die-offs beyond the observed mortality in southern elephant seals. Further sampling and aerial surveys were undertaken to assess whether infection had occurred in other species or locations not readily accessible to field teams.

Sample collection and testing

What samples were collected?

- Swab samples from dead seals and seabirds and faecal (scat) samples from live seabirds and seals were collected safely by trained scientists in accordance with approved protocols, using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- All samples were packaged securely according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations and stored safely onboard *RSV Nuyina* for return to Australia.
- Upon arrival, and following the necessary border clearances, samples were tested at ACDP.

What were the test results for all samples collected?

- HPAI was confirmed in 6 of the 9 species from HIMI that were tested, either through swabs of dead individuals or from faecal samples.
- High pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b was originally confirmed in samples from southern elephant seal collected in October 2025.
- Analysis of swab samples collected in January 2026 detected HPAI in southern elephant seals, Antarctic fur seals, gentoo penguins and a South Georgia diving petrel.
 - The South Georgia diving petrel was previously classified as suspect positive, but further testing has confirmed as H5 bird flu.
- Follow-up analysis of faecal samples from HIMI detected H5 bird flu in faeces from king penguin and brown skua.
- Faecal samples from southern giant petrel and macaroni penguin also tested positive for influenza, but the H5 bird flu strain could not be confirmed in those samples.

Was there any risk that bringing these samples back to Australia could introduce H5 bird flu?

- Comprehensive biosecurity measures were in place for these samples as well as all returning expeditioners, cargo, equipment and clothing to ensure any potential biosecurity risks are well managed.

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- Securely packaged samples are transported safely using well-established processes and laboratory networks to ACDP's high-containment laboratory, approved by DAFF as Biosecurity Containment Level 3 (BC3) or higher. This facility is purpose-built to safely handle viruses such as H5 bird flu, without risk to our communities, animals or environment.

Implications for Australia

Does detecting H5 bird flu at HIMI mean H5 bird flu is present in continental Australia?

- No. Australia continues to remain the only continent free from the highly contagious strain of bird flu.
- The detection on remote Heard Island does not mean the virus is present in Australia's wildlife or poultry populations.
- As of May 2026, there is no evidence of H5 bird flu on Macquarie Island, any of the New Zealand sub-Antarctic islands, or the Antarctic continent outside of the Antarctic Peninsula region

Does Australia need to increase its surveillance due to these new findings?

- This situation reinforces the importance of continued surveillance and preparedness on mainland Australia which will continue as planned.
- The Australian Government has committed more than \$113 million to strengthen surveillance, preparedness and response capability for a potential incursion of H5 bird flu.
- Industry, researchers, communities and government are also working together to monitor viruses and diseases in wild birds and animals. Some examples include:
 - Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance program.
 - the expansion of surveillance activities across the Murray-Darling Basin's wetlands and remote island parks.
 - through its Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy program, DAFF works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Indigenous ranger groups, and jurisdictions in northern Australia, conducting surveillance and raising awareness of bird flu in the region.
- State and territory governments conduct disease surveillance and control within their borders. This includes testing for bird flu when investigating disease and deaths in wild birds and poultry.

What does the detection mean for Australia and could it pose any risk to the Australian public, wildlife or the poultry industry?

- HIMI is a remote Australian external territory more than 4,000 km south-west of Perth and about 1,700 km north of Antarctica in the Southern Ocean.
- The risk of H5 bird flu to the Australian continent remains elevated as the virus continues to spread globally with significant impacts on poultry industries, wildlife and communities overseas.
- Detecting H5 bird flu at HIMI does not substantially increase the risk from the current high risk levels for Australia.
 - The possibility of long-distance spread of H5 bird flu over oceans was previously identified by French researchers who demonstrated spread from South Georgia to the Crozet and Kerguelen island groups.

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- This situation highlights the importance of continued surveillance and preparedness work across jurisdictions. Preparedness and surveillance activities on continental Australia will continue as planned.

Did Australia notify the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of the detection?

- The suspected disease was reported to the World Organisation for Animal Health in October 2025, with disease confirmation in seals reported in November 2025.
- Australia has since formally notified WOAH of the H5 bird flu detections in wild birds identified through testing of samples collected during voyage 2.

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Does confirmed H5 bird flu in non-poultry species in an external territory impact trade?

- H5 bird flu detections in non-poultry species do not affect a country's high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) status.
- There is no basis for trading partners to restrict Australian exports, as the detection occurred in wildlife and in a remote Australian external territory. This territory is treated as a separate entity from mainland Australia for disease status purposes.
- There have been no trade impacts since the confirmed detection and mainland Australia's HPAI-free status is expected to continue to be recognised. If any questions arise, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will engage with trading partners as needed to provide assurance.

How is Macquarie Island and its wildlife being prepared for a potential outbreak of H5 bird flu?

- DCCEEW's Australian Antarctic Division works closely with the Tasmanian Government on monitoring, preparedness and response plans for H5 bird flu on Macquarie Island.
- Rangers and scientists at Macquarie Island are trained and equipped to monitor for signs of H5 bird flu and conduct sampling if required.
- If Australia experiences a H5 bird flu incursion, there will be a rapid and coordinated national response led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, with state and territory governments leading response activities within their borders.

Environmental and wildlife support

How are you helping wildlife at HIMI, and will any disease control actions be taken?

- First the detection and now AAP scientists' new insights into the impacts of H5 bird flu at HIMI are sobering, but not unexpected.
- Unfortunately, the overseas experience is that there are few direct actions that can be taken in nature to mitigate the impacts of H5 bird flu. Combined with HIMI's remoteness and harsh conditions, active control measures are not planned at this stage.
- Fortunately, wildlife on HIMI exists in a largely undisturbed state. The territory of HIMI is free of most invasive species, meaning the compounding threats of predation and ecosystem degradation that our native species face in mainland Australia are mostly absent.
- The Australian Government strictly manages all human activities on HIMI. During the campaign, scientists assessed seabird and seal populations, including the Heard Island shag, Heard Island sheathbill and threatened seal species. Where feasible, data was collected to update population estimates of priority species.

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- In addition, the Australian Government and the state and territory governments are working to support biodiversity on the mainland by boosting resilience and other threat-mitigation measures for at-risk species, including the Australian sea lion.
- There are no visits to HIMI currently scheduled for the 2026/27 season.
- Surveillance and preparedness work is ongoing at Australia's four permanent Antarctic/sub-Antarctic research stations.

Southern elephant seal

- The southern elephant seal is listed as threatened under the *Environment, Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).
- H5 bird flu has caused mass deaths in pinnipeds, including southern elephant seals, across the world.
- For example, in 2023, H5 bird flu caused mass deaths of southern elephant seals in South America. The disease subsequently reached the sub-Antarctic – with elephant seals being very significantly impacted.
- Research published last year reported a 47% decline in 2024 in the number of breeding females at the 3 largest breeding colony beaches in South Georgia compared to 2022.
- Due to the impacts of H5 bird flu on southern elephant seals, the species has been uplisted to Vulnerable conservation status under international criteria (IUCN).
- Southern elephant seals have a limited number of breeding sites, which include Heard Island and Macquarie Island. If H5 bird flu was introduced to Macquarie Island it would be a concern as the population at this site has experienced long-term population declines, likely driven by changes in foraging habitat in the Antarctic.

Antarctic fur seal

- The Antarctic fur seal is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act
 - the species is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act (however, the subantarctic fur seal, which is a related species, is listed as threatened).
 - The Antarctic fur seal global conservation status was recently uplisted to Endangered due to widespread population declines.
- H5 bird flu has caused mass deaths in fur seals across the world and was confirmed in the species on South Georgia during late 2023, with significant mortalities reported at multiple sites.
- Because fur seals, such as the Antarctic fur seal, are long-lived, slow-reproducing, apex predators, sudden, large losses could cause flow on ecosystem effects and negatively impact population trajectories for many years.

King penguin

- The king penguin is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act (however it is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act).
- King penguins have a large geographic range. They breed on many sub-Antarctic islands and on the Antarctic Peninsula. They generally occupy breeding sites all year round.
- Within Australia's territory, the king penguin breeds at Heard, McDonald and Macquarie Islands.
- The global population was considered to be increasing in the last estimate (2020). A review is currently underway.

Gentoo penguin

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- The gentoo penguin is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act (however it is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act).
- Gentoo penguins have a large geographic range. They breed on many sub-Antarctic islands and on the Antarctic Peninsula. They generally occupy breeding sites all year round.
- Within Australia's territory, the gentoo penguin breeds at Heard and Macquarie Islands.
- The current population status on Heard Island is unknown (data from 2025/26 is still in review), the population on Macquarie Island is declining.
- While overall the gentoo global population is considered stable any detection of H5 bird flu in a species is a sobering discovery.

South Georgia diving petrel

- The South Georgia diving petrel is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act (however it is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act).
- This species has a large geographic range, breeding around the sub-Antarctic.

Brown skua

- The brown skua is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act (however it is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act). Brown skua have a large geographic range. They breed on many sub-Antarctic islands and on the Antarctic Peninsula.

Southern giant petrel

- The southern giant petrel is listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act. The Heard Island population is globally important as it holds more than 5% of the breeding population.
- This species has a large foraging range and is capable of long-distance circumpolar travel.

Macaroni penguin

- The macaroni penguin is protected as a marine species under the EPBC Act (however it is not listed as threatened under the EPBC Act). The HIMI population is globally important as it holds more than 10% of the breeding population.

OFFICIAL



**SENATOR THE HON MURRAY WATT
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER
SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND**

**THE HON JULIE COLLINS MP
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY**

MEDIA RELEASE

Xx, June 2026

FUNDING BOOST TO BOLSTER H5 BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS

The Albanese Labor Government is delivering an additional \$11.2 million to further ramp up efforts to prepare our most at-risk native species for a potential outbreak of H5 avian influenza (bird flu).

Australia is the only continent that remains free from H5 bird flu, which has rapidly spread globally, primarily through the movement of migratory birds, leading to significant impacts on poultry, wild birds and some mammal species overseas.

If H5 bird flu reaches Australia it could significantly impact wildlife, threatened species and agricultural industries, which is why the Albanese Labor Government has invested over \$113 million to strengthen Australia's preparedness.

This latest funding in the 2026-27 Budget bolsters preparedness activities, including invasive species control and habitat improvement across the country, and a focus on eradicating invasive species on Australia's offshore islands.

Many of these islands contain globally significant bird breeding colonies, and act as refuges for threatened seabirds, shorebirds, marine mammals and species found nowhere else in the world. In the event of a potential H5 bird flu outbreak, these species could experience severe population impacts.

New information from the Australian Antarctic Program released today [\[LINK\]](#) highlights why it's so important to continue building on our preparedness efforts.

Recently Australian scientists undertook two management voyages to Heard Island and McDonald Islands, a remote sub-Antarctic Australian external territory about 4,000km south-west of Western Australia.

Earlier testing confirmed the presence of H5 bird flu in samples collected from southern elephant seals, Antarctic fur seals and gentoo penguins on Heard Island.

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Analysis is now complete on additional samples and extensive drone footage taken of the islands, which has revealed significant mortalities in southern elephant seal pups, and confirmed bird flu in several more bird species.

The findings also point to suspected H5 bird flu impacts on McDonald Island, with evidence of elephant seal pup mortality. However, due to the protected status of the island, no on-ground sampling was undertaken, meaning laboratory confirmation was not possible.

As part of the Albanese Labor Government's more than \$113 million bird flu investment, over \$47 million has been committed for environmental measures.

Examples of successful projects underway include:

- In South Australia, early project results show Australian sea lion pups are in better, healthier condition after treatment for hookworm infection. Pups have been monitored using pup shelters installed at high-risk sites, including Seal Bay. The shelters aim to enhance pup survival by reducing heat stress and the effects of adult male aggression.
- In the Northern Territory Mary River region, aerial pest and weed control is delivering strong results, with over 5,500 pigs removed and more than 1,700 hectares treated for invasive weeds to support at-risk species like the magpie goose.
- At Port Stephens off-shore islands in NSW, on-ground biosecurity measures are actively underway, with monitoring deployed and early results indicating no detections of pest species.
- Within the Coral Sea Marine Park, one of Australia's most spectacular marine treasures, rapid weed removal on Willis Island is targeting invasive species such as dwarf poinsettia and it's delivering immediate benefits. Seabirds have returned within 24 hours – including sooty terns – and have reoccupied nesting habitat and commenced egg laying, demonstrating the direct positive effects of ecological restoration works on critical breeding sites.
- Funding is also helping key wildlife facilities safeguard captive populations of threatened native species. In total, 29 facilities with 31 threatened species have received crucial support to help them prepare for H5 bird flu. This includes the Tasmanian devil, orange-bellied parrot and regent honeyeater.

Quotes attributable to Minister for the Environment and Water, Murray Watt:

"While these latest findings from the AAD scientific team are expected based on earlier testing, any loss of wildlife is sobering.

"For now we're free from the serious and contagious H5 bird flu, but as it continues to spread globally, we must be realistic about the likelihood of an incursion here, and plan accordingly.

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“The best way to prepare our native wildlife is to ensure strong, healthy populations. That’s why we’ve provided an additional \$11.2 million in this year’s Budget for continuing support for at-risk species resilience and reducing the impacts of other threats, bringing our total environmental investment to \$47 million.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Julie Collins:

“Australia remains the only continent free from the highly contagious strain of H5 bird flu, and we’re doing everything we can to prepare for, detect and respond rapidly to any incursion.

S 47C

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACTS:

s 22(1)(a)(ii) **WATT** s 22(1)(a)(ii) | MediaWatt@dcceew.gov.au

s 22(1)(a)(ii) **(COLLINS)** s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Media.Collins@aff.gov.au

Vision and stills link:

<https://images.antarctica.gov.au/rs10?c=14821&k=771bd27d63>

**Please note, video must be downloaded to view full compile*

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ag Media
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 4:17 PM
To: s 47E(d) s 22(1)(a)(ii) Ag Media
Subject: RE: Transcript item request from s 22(1)(a)(ii) [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: Bird_flu.m4a

OFFICIAL

Hiya Stroom,

I've attached the full audio file here please for transcribing at your earliest convenience.

Thanks!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media
Public Affairs Officer
Communications and Media Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
P: s 22(1)(a)(ii) media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

From: s 47E(d)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:33 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) Ag Media
<Media@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Transcript item request from s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Transcript Request

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

We've received a Transcript request from you.
The Stroom team will process this request as soon as possible.

Channel
ABC News Australia

Program
ABC News Afternoons

Date and Time

19 June 2026, 3:17pm (Australia/Sydney)

If you did not make this request, or have changed your mind, you can cancel your request here:

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Stroom

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Cookson, Beth
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 6:44 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s 47E(d) Collins, Monica; s 47E(d) ; Smith, Brant; Hamilton, Sam; Palfreyman, Louise
Subject: UPDATE - situation report to CCEAD - Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

See full readout from situation update of CCEAD members and observers below, including the ACDP result that I relayed earlier via Signal.

Beth.

OFFICIAL

From: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 6:22 PM
To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.LOWE@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren <Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>
Cc: s 47E(d) s 22(1)(a)(ii)
s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 47E(d)
Subject: RE: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline

Dear all

Today I chaired a situation update meeting with members and observers of the Consultative Committee for Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) on a suspected detection of H5 Avian Influenza in wild birds in Western Australia. CCEAD members and observers in attendance included CVOs, representatives from the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Australian Duck Meat Association, the Australian CDC, the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Wildlife Health Australia and Animal Health Australia.

Of note, during the meeting, ACDP confirmed a positive PCR result for Influenza A (H5), and that sequencing testing remains in progress with results expected at around midnight tonight.

Situation update

Michelle Rodan, the WA CVO, provided a situation update.

- On 18 June 2026, the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) reported a positive PCR result for influenza A (H5) from a single brown skua. The skua was found by a member of the public on Cape Le Grand beach, Esperance, on 14 June 2026, and provided to a wildlife carer in Esperance. The skua died overnight after being treated in isolation.

- A sick giant petrel, found in the same region as the skua, has since been taken into care at the same wildlife hospital. Preliminary testing results from WA are anticipated later today.
- There are no other birds or wildlife at the wildlife carer.
- Both the skua and giant petrel species have a known distribution from Antarctica to Heard Island and are known to arrive in this region of western Australia periodically.
- The Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) received a sample from the skua this morning. ACDP confirmed a positive PCR result for Influenza A (H5), but sequencing testing remains in progress. Sequencing testing will confirm the virus's clade, pathogenicity and level of relatedness with other Antarctic and sub-Antarctic detections. Sequencing results are expected to be available at midnight tonight.
 - The pathogenicity of the virus will determine whether the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) would be activated as H5 HPAI is listed under this Agreement.
- A WA DPIRD incident management team has been established to manage the response to this incident.
- WA will implement enhanced general surveillance on a regional basis.
- WA is considering whether to implement a 'housing order' on a regional basis under the *Exotic Diseases of Animals Act 1993*.

Communications

- WA will undertake targeted engagement with veterinarians and wildlife carers this afternoon.
- The WA Minister for Agriculture and Food is intending to make a media statement on the incident this afternoon.
- The Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture intends to make a media statement on the incident this afternoon and on the morning of Saturday 20 June 2026.
- National talking points are currently being prepared in consultation with NBCEN.

International reporting

- DAFF will consider implications for international reporting (including to the World Organisation for Animal Health) informed ACDP's diagnostic results tonight. This will be discussed further at tomorrow's meeting of the CCEAD.

Outcomes and actions

- A CCEAD meeting on this incident, informed by ACDP's diagnostic testing results, will be on Saturday 20 June 2026 at 8am AEST / 6am AWST.

Regards

Beth.

From: Cookson, Beth

Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 8:21 PM

To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.LOWE@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren <Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s 47E(d)

Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline

Importance: High

Dear all

- I was advised earlier this evening by the WA CVO of a single vagrant skua (species of seabird with known distribution through subantarctic) east of Esperance that has tested positive at WA DPIRD laboratory for H5 Influenza A. The skua was found sick on 14/6 with clinical signs of

leg paralysis, weakness and dehydration. It subsequently died overnight after being treated in isolation at Esperance wildlife centre.

- A sick petrel, also with a distribution to subantarctic has also been taken into care at the same wildlife hospital and tested. Preliminary results tomorrow.
- Samples from the skua are en route to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing.
- There are no other reported sick birds or other animals in the vicinity. It is possible that individual infected animals can arrive and not establish infection in local populations, however if confirmed, would raise concern about active pathways.
- Petrels and skuas are known to arrive periodically as vagrant species, any onward spread (if confirmed) is undetermined at this stage.

Next steps

- ACDP need to complete a series of tests before confirmation of the strain of Influenza A will be known.
 - Samples should arrive from WA tomorrow morning. If this happens as expected, we should have preliminary test results from ACDP by early afternoon tomorrow confirming whether test positive for H5 Influenza A. We will not have confirmation of the strain being high pathogenicity and the clade of concern for another 24-28 hours following this, however I would treat it as highly suspicious that it is the H5 strain of concern given the species and location if ACDP confirm the WA lab results of H5 positive.
- I will work with the WA CVO on the timing for the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease to meet which is the next step. It is likely this will occur after the test results from ACDP are received tomorrow.
- Industry have not been advised. We will do this as part of the CCEAD meeting requests, following ACDP preliminary test results.

I will keep you informed as we have new information. s 47B(a)

We'll prepare media holding lines, if needed.

Beth.

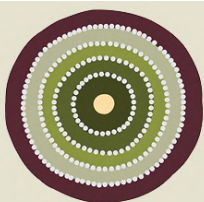
Dr Beth Cookson BVSc (Hons), EMPA, MANZCVS (Epidemiology)

Chief Veterinary Officer

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

T. s 47F(1) E. beth.cookson@aff.gov.au

agriculture.gov.au



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Cookson, Beth
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 11:36 PM
To: Ipkendanz, Chris; Ag Media; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Cc: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** Palfreyman, Louise; Collins, Monica; Smith, Brant; Hamilton, Sam
Subject: RE: 20 June MR and TPs/Q+A - Due 7:30pm tonight (19 June) [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi all

Just confirming updates in links below. Including new information on the test results from the sick petrel received this evening.

Beth.

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From: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 6:48 PM
To: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Subject: 20 June MR and TPs/Q+A - Due 7:30pm tonight (19 June) [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

Please see TPs and Q+A draft for tomorrow here -  [20 June TPs - H5 WA.docx](#)

And media release drafted for positive results here -  [IF CONFIRMED MR.docx](#)

If you could please edit and come back to me by 7:30pm that would be the most appreciated, then I'll share with the MO.

Thank you!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Public Affairs Officer
Communications and Media Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
P: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 9:35 PM
To: Ipkendanz, Chris
Subject: Re: Situation Update – Suspect H5 bird flu – Western Australia – 20260619 – 2000 AEST [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

Thanks Chris. Reporting template looks good.

Talk soon,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 21:32:04
To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Preece, Jason
<Jason.Preece@aff.gov.au>; Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam
<Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) Smith, Brant
<Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Clarke, Brian
<Brian.Clarke@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii) Osborne, Luke <Luke.Osborne@aff.gov.au>;
Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Gavin, David <David.Gavin@aff.gov.au>; Granton-Smith, Rachel
<Rachel.Granton-Smith@aff.gov.au>; Hutchison, Tina <Tina.Hutchison@aff.gov.au>; Greenville, Jared
<Jared.Greenville@aff.gov.au>; Black, Tom <Tom.Black@aff.gov.au>; McDonald, Andrew
<Andrew.McDonald@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>; Galeano, David
<David.Galeano@aff.gov.au>; Denny, Paul <Paul.Denny@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren
<Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>; Sanson -Fisher, Jadd
<Jadd.Sanson-Fisher@aff.gov.au>; Simpson, Tim <Tim.Simpson@aff.gov.au>; Geysen, Matthew
<Matthew.Geysen@aff.gov.au>; Curran, Carmel <Carmel.Curran1@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Ipkendanz, Chris
<Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Cc: Benson, Stuart <Stuart.Benson@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Situation Update – Suspect H5 bird flu – Western Australia – 20260619 – 2000 AEST
[SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Good evening,

Please see below a short summary of the current situation and actions taken today in response to the suspected detection of H5 bird flu in WA. Also attached are the current National Talking Points (NTPs) for reference.

NB: reporting formats and distribution lists will be further refined as the response progresses.

Situation Update – Suspect H5 bird flu – Western Australia – 20260619 – 2000 AEST

Current situation

- On 18 June 2026, initial state-based testing detected avian influenza in a wild brown skua (seabird) that was found sick on an isolated beach in Southern WA and later died while being cared for in isolation.
- On 19 June 2026, the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) confirmed a positive PCR result for Influenza A (H5), but sequencing testing remains in progress.
 - Sequencing testing will confirm the virus's clade, pathogenicity and level of relatedness with other Antarctic and sub-Antarctic detections.
 - Sequencing results are expected to be available at midnight tonight.
- DAFF will consider implications for international reporting (including to the World Organisation for Animal Health) informed by ACDP's diagnostic results tonight.

Completed Actions

- DAFF Crisis and Incident Response Plan to moved ALERT phase in anticipation of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5 being confirmed.
- Convened HPAI Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) to provide situation update.
- Provided support to Minister Collins to deliver a doorstep on the suspected detection.
- The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer (ACVO) chaired a situation update meeting with members and observers of the Consultative Committee for Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD).
- National Talking Points developed and circulated via National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network (NBCEN) (attached).

Planned Actions (next 24hrs)

- Scheduled meetings
 - 0800 AEST – CCEAD meeting
 - 1200 AEST – DAFF Response Coordination Group (RCG) meeting
 - 1230 AEST – HPAI IDC meeting
 - 1330 AEST – National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) meeting (to be confirmed)
- Media and communication
 - 0930 AEST – Press conference – Minister Collins and ACVO
 - Media Release following confirmation of results by ACDP (to be confirmed)
 - National Talking Points to be updated
- Planning and reporting
 - Embed daily situation reporting into operational tempo
 - Finalise crisis appreciation and strategic plan following ACDP confirmation
 - Progress scenario-based contingency planning

Regards,

Chris Ipkendanz

Assistant Secretary | Crisis and Emergency Management Branch | **s 47F(1)**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 Strategy, Performance and Engagement Division
 Agriculture House, 70 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT 2601 Australia
 GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:53 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) | Senior Adviser
Office of Julie Collins MP
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:51 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; lpkendanz, Chris <Chris.lpkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam
<Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>
Subject: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) See below.

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia.

Initial testing at DPIRD's laboratory has returned a suspected positive result for avian influenza. Samples have been sent to CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing, with results expected tomorrow.

We cannot confirm yet whether it is the strain of concern circulating at this stage, known as H5 bird flu.

There is no evidence of any mass mortality at this time, nor any evidence of infection in poultry.

WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate a response with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A key message for everyone is please do not touch sick or dead birds or animals. If you see multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, take photos or a video from a safe distance. Record your location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I want everyone to know this is what we've been preparing for. We've undertaken a series of national exercises and invested \$113m to strengthen our nations preparedness for H5 bird flu, including an additional \$11.2m in the recent 2026-2027 Budget.

If confirmed to be H5 bird flu this will be sobering but not unexpected given the spread globally.

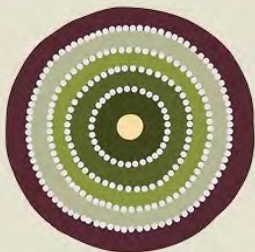
I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

B.

Dr Brant Smith BVSc, MVPHMgt, MAICD
First Assistant Secretary | Biosecurity Animal Division
National Animal Disease Preparedness Coordinator
Mental Health Champion

s 47F(1) | Executive Assistant: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
70 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601
GPO Box 858, Canberra City ACT 2601
daff.gov.au biosecurity.gov.au



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Supporting Flexibility - if you receive an email from me outside of normal business hours, I'm sending it at a time that suits me. Unless it's marked urgent, I'm not expecting you to read or reply until normal business hours.

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 5:24 PM
To: s 47F(1) ; s 47F(1)
Subject: Re: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s 47F(1)

Thanks for reaching out. It will be me from the biosecurity and agriculture side. Please do let me know when suits. As you can imagine, it's an evolving situation as confirmatory testing needs to be done but we will have more information available as soon as we can.

Kind regards and talk soon,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 47F(1)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 17:20:58
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) ; s 47F(1)
Subject: Fwd: FW: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 47F(1)

Hope you are all well. I'm contacting you all in light of the concerning update below regarding a possible bird flu case in Western Australia.

As you will be aware, AMCS worked closely with Birdlife Australia and Invasive Species Council to get the government to commit to funding for preparedness. It was great to see this ongoing in the latest Federal Budget. We clearly see bird flu as a significant threat to the marine environment and particularly endemic species such as the Australian sea lion and have been keeping our supporters updated.

I understand that Birdlife Australia has sought an urgent briefing on this issue. I'm contacting you all as I'm unsure of the best contacts in Minister Collins and Watts offices on this issue. AMCS would appreciate a briefing at the earliest opportunity, and as more information / testing results come available.

I will be in Parliament Tuesday / Wednesday next week and happy to discuss further then or before, available on the mobile number below.

Thanks
s 47F(1)

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Protected Species s 47E(d)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:32 PM

Cc: s 47F(1)

High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Protected Species

s 47E(d) ; s 47F(1)

Subject: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon

We're emailing to let you know that a suspect case of H5 bird flu has been detected. Minister Collins is holding a press conference to share what is currently known, namely that a wild bird with clinical signs has presented in south-west Western Australia.

At this stage, there is no indication of further spread.

With thanks

s 47F(1)

Biodiversity Division | Threatened Species Commissioner Branch| HPAI – Protected Species

Ngunnawal Country, John Gorton Building, King Edward Terrace | GPO Box 3090

ACT 2601

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

DCCEEW.gov.au ABN 63 573 932 849



Acknowledgement of Country

Our department recognises the First Peoples of this nation and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

OFFICIAL

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s 47F(1)

Campaigns Director

Australian Marine Conservation Society

Available Monday - Friday

m: **s 47F(1)**

p: **s 47F(1)**

w: marineconservation.org.au

a: Yuggera Turrbal Country, PO Box 5815, West End QLD 4101



Help protect our ocean wildlife by becoming a [Sea Guardian](#) today.

I usually live, meet and work on the land of the Cammeraygal people of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play in caring for land and sea country.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Smith, Brant
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:44 PM
To: Secretary's Office; Collins, Monica; Cookson, Beth; Lowe, Matt; Hutchison, Tina; Crosthwaite, Kerren; Ipkendanz, Chris; Wellington, Michelle; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)** ^{s 22(1)(a)(ii)}
Cc: Hamilton, Sam; Palfreyman, Louise
Subject: FOR INFO - situation update - key meetings and outcomes - technical engagement. [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon.

Please see below update on consultation on suspect avian influenza case in WA.

HPAI IDC

I chaired the HPAI IDC this morning at 11am. Beth gave a sit rep to members, Chris/Michelle gave an update on crisis management arrangements and communications, and we fielded a range of questions from members. Key agencies and centrals were all in attendance.

We've agreed to meet daily for situational awareness including over the weekend which I will chair, or as and when the formal governance arrangements stand up under Chris. Members were appreciative of the update.

CCEAD

A CCEAD is underway at the moment started at 2:30pm chaired by Beth and Louise P is the Commonwealth rep. This includes all states and territories CVOs, the three industries that are part of the EADRA deeds – chicken meat federation, egg farmers and duck meat federation. AHA is also a member and Wildlife Health Australia.

Commonwealth departmental senior rep from Environment and Health have been invited to attend for awareness.

Ministerial stand up.

Min standup is at 3:15pm in Hobart and points were provided to her on what can be stated publicly at this point in the process.

Test results timing

As we are all aware further more specific test results will be coming from ACDP when completed. Further information will be provided when they come to hand which will be provided and use tomorrow morning should the Minister agree to do a standup in Canberra with officials.

This is all moving swiftly and is going well with a few lumps to iron out on handling, but all in all the right messaging is getting to the right people, noting it is still fluid.

Thanks all

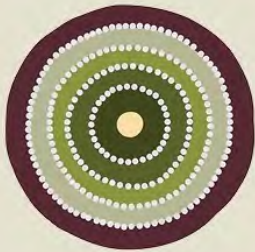
B.

Ps if I forget anyone on the above email please provide to them.

Dr Brant Smith BVSc, MVPHMgt, MAICD
First Assistant Secretary | Biosecurity Animal Division
National Animal Disease Preparedness Coordinator
Mental Health Champion

s 47F(1) | Executive Assistant: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
70 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601
GPO Box 858, Canberra City ACT 2601
daff.gov.au biosecurity.gov.au



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OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Smith, Brant
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:51 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Cookson, Beth; Wellington, Michelle; Ipkendanz, Chris; Collins, Monica; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Palfreyman, Louise; Hamilton, Sam
Subject: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) See below.

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There is no evidence of any mass mortality at this time, nor any evidence of infection in poultry.

WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate a response with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A key message for everyone is please do not touch sick or dead birds or animals. If you see multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, take photos or a video from a safe distance. Record your location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I want everyone to know this is what we've been preparing for. We've undertaken a series of national exercises and invested \$113m to strengthen our nations preparedness for H5 bird flu, including an additional \$11.2m in the recent 2026-2027 Budget.

If confirmed to be H5 bird flu this will be sobering but not unexpected given the spread globally.

I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

B.

Dr Brant Smith BVSc, MVPHMgt, MAICD

First Assistant Secretary | Biosecurity Animal Division
National Animal Disease Preparedness Coordinator
Mental Health Champion

s 47F(1) | Executive Assistant: s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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OFFICIAL



Australian Government

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

H5 avian influenza (bird flu) suspect case

National talking points – 19 June 2026

APPROVED

Key messages

- The Western Australia (WA) Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern WA, in Cape Le Grand National Park.
- Confirmatory testing is underway.
- Australia is well prepared to respond quickly to H5 bird flu to protect poultry production and reduce impacts on wildlife and communities.

What we know

- On 18 June 2026, initial state-based testing detected avian influenza in a wild brown skua (pronounced skew-ah), a type of seabird, that was found sick on an isolated beach in Southern WA, on 14 June and later died while being cared for in isolation.
- We do not know yet if this is the highly pathogenic H5 bird flu strain that has spread worldwide.
- Confirmatory testing is underway at the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness to determine if this is H5 bird flu. Results are expected on Saturday 20 June 2026.
- DPIRD is also testing a sick giant petrel from the same region. These species are migratory seabird species that occasionally visit southern Australia.
- There have been no detections in poultry and there is no evidence of other species mortalities at this time.
- H5 bird flu is a low health risk to the public as it rarely affects humans.
- Bird flu is not a food safety risk for chicken meat and eggs if they are handled and cooked correctly.

What we're doing

- DPRID has responded swiftly to the detection.
- WA, as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate response activity with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- Australia is well prepared to respond to H5 bird flu and has well-established national response arrangements in place to respond to animal disease incidents.
- WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate response activity with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This will include enhanced general surveillance undertaken on a regional basis and with targeted extension and engagement with the poultry industry, veterinarians and wildlife carers.
- The Australian Government has committed more than \$113 million to strengthen surveillance, preparedness and response capability for a potential incursion. This includes:
 - \$43.9 million to enhance national coordination of response arrangements and communications, strengthen surveillance and boost biosecurity capacity and capability.
 - \$47.1 million to accelerate protective action for threatened species and priority biodiversity.
 - \$22.1 million to increase the amount of ready-to-use pandemic flu vaccines and antivirals in the National Medical Stockpile (NMS).

- A dedicated Australian Government taskforce was established in 2024 to strengthen preparedness for a possible incursion, jointly led by DAFF, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) on behalf of the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA) and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).
- Australian governments have worked together to strengthen national governance and establish cost-sharing arrangements in the event of an outbreak in wildlife and have tested these arrangements through scenario-based exercises.
- Planning has been carried out for key areas including national parks and Australia's external territories such as Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Norfolk Island, and the Australian Antarctic Territory.
- The Australian Government is actively working through regulatory and policy arrangements for the potential vaccination of some priority native bird species. Government and industry are also jointly reviewing the policy for vaccination of poultry.
- The Communicable Diseases Network Australia developed the [National guideline for avian influenza: protecting people who work with birds and wildlife](https://www.cdc.gov.au/healthcare-providers/infectious-diseases/avian-influenza) (cdc.gov.au). The guidelines provide general advice for employers on protecting workers from all types of bird flu.
- Australian governments are engaging with First Nations people and community leaders to ensure community needs are met before and during any outbreak of H5 bird flu. Access to Country may be temporarily impacted in affected areas to prevent disease spread and protect human health. Culturally and economically important species could also be impacted.

What you can do

- The community is encouraged to report any dead or sick birds or animals showing [signs of bird flu](#).
- If you see multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, do not touch them.
- **Avoid** contact. **Record** what you see. **Report** it to the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888** from anywhere in Australia.
- Keep pets away from wildlife, including preventing cats from roaming and keeping dogs on leads in wildlife areas.
- When going to and from national parks, reserves or farms, clean your footwear, clothing and vehicle to help prevent spreading diseases between places.
- If you own, care for, or work with birds or chickens, you should:
 - prevent wild birds from mingling with your birds, and accessing their feed and water
 - keep pens, aviaries, feeders and equipment clean
 - wash hands thoroughly with soap before and after handling birds
 - monitor birds for signs of disease or sudden deaths.
- Poultry producers are reminded that on-farm biosecurity practices are crucial to protect the health of their flocks.

Find out more

- Information about H5 bird flu is available at birdflu.gov.au

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 4:43 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 47E(d)
Cc: Anderson, Victoria; s 47E(d) Saunders, Justine; Ag Media; Curran, Carmel; s 47E(d) s; Crnov, Rosa; s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 47E(d) Cookson, Beth; Hamilton, Sam; s 47E(d); Vivian-Smith, Gabrielle; s 47E(d);
s 22(1)(a)(ii) Jones, Allison; Wilson, Ben; Garms, Brian; Bruce, Sarah; See Kee, Wayne; s 47E(d) Smith, Brant; Palfreyman, Louise; Sykes, Kristin; Prattley, Rochelle; s 47E(d) ; Grosse, Graeme; Medway, Nicholas; s 22(1)(a)(ii) Finnin, Peter; Gavin, David; Granton-Smith, Rachel; Wells, Julia; s 47E(d) ; Collins, Monica; Simpson, Jim; Laduzko, Josephine; Fischer, Vikki; Buckle, Holly; Errington, Sonya; s 47E(d) ; McDonald, Andrew; Martin, Jemma
Subject: Biosecurity incidents - update week ending 19 June 2026 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: MO biosecurity update - 2026.06.19.docx

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please find attached an update on biosecurity incidents for the week ending 19 June 2026.

This document is a weekly update provided to the Minister's Office that contains details on significant biosecurity incident responses being undertaken for post border detections of plant, animal and environmental pests and diseases.

Please note that a recent suspected case of avian influenza H5 strain in Western Australia is under investigation and was announced by the Minister today ([Suspected detection of H5 strain of bird flu in WA, which would be first in Australia - ABC News](#)). Once confirmed, appropriate briefings will be provided to the MO, and the matter will be included in the next weekly MO report.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

A/g Director
Response | Plant Health Policy
Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601 Australia

biosecurity.gov.au

Your first stop for biosecurity information



OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Tuesday, 16 June 2026 1:19 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: s 22(1)(a)(ii) shared "2526-168 MO WORKING DRAFT - COLLINS - MR - CITIZEN SCIENCE TO STRENGTHEN BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS" with you



s 22(1)(a)(ii) invited you to edit a file

Hi team, Please find the Birdlife HPAI grant draft release attached. Let me know if you have any questions.



2526-168 MO WORKING DRAFT - COLLINS - MR - CITIZEN SCIENCE TO STRENGTHEN BIRD FLU



This invite will only work for you and people with existing access.

Open

Share



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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Wednesday, 17 June 2026 9:50 AM
To: Ag Media
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Fact-check request
Attachments: 2606XX_-_WATT_COLLINS_-_H5_Budget.docx

Would it be possible to get a redline only fact-check on attached by 11am today?

Regards

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:52 AM
To: Ag Media
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: MINISTERS WATT & COLLINS - MEDIA RELEASE - FUNDING BOOST TO BOLSTER H5 BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS - THURSDAY, 18 JUNE 2026 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Could the below please be added to the Minister's website?

From: Media Watt s 47E(d)
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:27 AM
To: PMO Media s 47E(d)
Subject: MINISTERS WATT & COLLINS - MEDIA RELEASE - FUNDING BOOST TO BOLSTER H5 BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS - THURSDAY, 18 JUNE 2026 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL



MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 18 June 2026

FUNDING BOOST TO BOLSTER H5 BIRD FLU PREPAREDNESS

The Albanese Labor Government is delivering an additional \$11.2 million to further ramp up efforts to prepare our most at-risk native species for a potential outbreak of H5 avian influenza (bird flu).

Australia is the only continent that remains free from H5 bird flu, which has rapidly spread globally, primarily through the movement of migratory birds, leading to significant impacts on poultry, wild birds and some mammal species overseas.

If H5 bird flu reaches Australia it could significantly impact wildlife, threatened species and agricultural industries, which is why the Albanese Labor Government has invested over \$113 million to strengthen Australia's preparedness.

This latest funding in the 2026-27 Budget bolsters preparedness activities, including invasive species control and habitat improvement across the country, and a focus on eradicating invasive species on Australia's offshore islands.

Many of these islands contain globally significant bird breeding colonies, and act as refuges for threatened seabirds, shorebirds, marine mammals and species found nowhere else in the world. In the event of a potential H5 bird flu outbreak, these species could experience severe population impacts.

New information from the Australian Antarctic Program [released today](#) highlights why it's so important to continue building on our preparedness efforts.

Recently Australian scientists undertook two management voyages to Heard Island and McDonald Islands, a remote sub-Antarctic Australian external territory about 4,000km south-west of Western Australia.

Earlier testing confirmed the presence of H5 bird flu in samples collected from southern elephant seals, Antarctic fur seals and gentoo penguins on Heard Island. Analysis is now complete on additional samples and extensive drone footage taken of the islands, which has revealed significant mortalities in southern elephant seal pups, and confirmed bird flu in several more bird species.

The findings also point to suspected H5 bird flu impacts on McDonald Islands, with evidence of elephant seal pup mortality. However, due to the protected status of the island, no on-ground sampling was undertaken, meaning laboratory confirmation was not possible.

As part of the Albanese Labor Government's more than \$113 million bird flu investment, over \$47 million has been committed for environmental measures.

Examples of successful projects underway include:

- In South Australia, early project results show Australian sea lion pups are in better, healthier condition after treatment for hookworm infection. Pups have been monitored using pup shelters installed at high-risk sites, including Seal Bay. The shelters aim to enhance pup survival by reducing heat stress and the effects of adult male aggression.
- In the Northern Territory Mary River region, aerial pest and weed control is delivering strong results, with over 5,500 pigs removed and more than 1,700 hectares treated for invasive weeds to support at-risk species like the magpie goose.
- At Port Stephens off-shore islands in NSW, on-ground biosecurity measures are actively underway, with monitoring deployed and early results indicating no detections of pest species.

- Within the Coral Sea Marine Park, one of Australia's most spectacular marine treasures, rapid weed removal on Willis Island is targeting invasive species such as dwarf poinsettia and it's delivering immediate benefits. Seabirds have returned within 24 hours – including sooty terns – and have reoccupied nesting habitat and commenced egg laying, demonstrating the direct positive effects of ecological restoration works on critical breeding sites.
- Funding is also helping key wildlife facilities safeguard captive populations of threatened native species. In total, 29 facilities with 31 threatened species have received crucial support to help them prepare for H5 bird flu. This includes the Tasmanian devil, orange-bellied parrot and regent honeyeater.

Quotes attributable to Minister for the Environment and Water, Murray Watt:

“While these latest findings from the AAD scientific team are expected based on earlier testing, any loss of wildlife is sobering.

“For now we’re free from the serious and contagious H5 bird flu, but as it continues to spread globally, we must be realistic about the likelihood of an incursion here, and plan accordingly.

“The best way to prepare our native wildlife is to ensure strong, healthy populations. That’s why we’ve provided an additional \$11.2 million in this year's Budget for continuing support for at-risk species resilience and reducing the impacts of other threats, bringing our total environmental investment to \$47 million.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Julie Collins:

“Australia remains the only continent free from the highly contagious strain of H5 bird flu, and we’re doing everything we can to prepare for, detect and respond rapidly to any incursion.

“The funding announced in this year’s Budget shows that preparedness for H5 bird flu remains a high priority for the Albanese Labor Government.

“The spread of H5 bird flu to Heard Island reinforces the importance of ongoing vigilance and coordinated biosecurity measures in Australia.”

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACTS:

s 22(1)(a)(ii) WATT) s 22(1)(a)(ii) | MediaWatt@dcceew.gov.au

s 22(1)(a)(ii) (COLLINS) s 22(1)(a)(ii) - Media.Collins@aff.gov.au

Vision and stills link: <https://images.antarctica.gov.au/rs10?c=14821&k=771bd27d63>

**Please note, video must be downloaded to view full compile*

OFFICIAL

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--- This is an auto-forwarded email. To unsubscribe from the auto-forward, please [s 47E\(d\)](#)

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:30 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:18 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cookson, Beth
<Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Ag Media <Media@aff.gov.au>
Subject: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please see DAFF cleared media release on bird flu here -  [2526-170 MO DRAFT MR - H5 WA.docx](#)

And media TPs and Q+A here -  [MO TPs - H5 WA - 19 June.docx](#)

Thanks!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media
Public Affairs Officer
Communications and Media Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
P: s 22(1)(a)(ii) media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:30 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FW: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia.

Initial testing at DPIRD's laboratory has returned a suspected positive result for avian influenza. Samples have been sent to CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing, with results expected tomorrow.

We cannot confirm yet whether it is the strain of concern circulating at this stage, known as H5 bird flu.

There is no evidence of any mass mortality at this time, nor any evidence of infection in poultry.

WA as the lead jurisdiction, will coordinate a response with national coordination led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

A key message for everyone is please do not touch sick or dead birds or animals. If you see multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, take photos or a video from a safe distance. Record your location and report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

I want everyone to know this is what we've been preparing for. We've undertaken a series of national exercises and invested \$113m to strengthen our nations preparedness for H5 bird flu, including an additional \$11.2m in the recent 2026-2027 Budget.

If confirmed to be H5 bird flu this will be sobering but not unexpected given the spread globally.

I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:18 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Ipkendanz, Chris; Wellington, Michelle; Collins, Monica; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cookson, Beth; Smith, Brant; Ag Media
Subject: Bird Flu MR + TPs/Q+A [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hello s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please see DAFF cleared media release on bird flu here - [2526-170 MO DRAFT MR - H5 WA.docx](#)

And media TPs and Q+A here - [MO TPs - H5 WA - 19 June.docx](#)

Thanks!

Kindest,
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Media

Public Affairs Officer
Communications and Media Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
s 22(1)(a)(ii) media@aff.gov.au

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Wellington, Michelle
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 2:20 PM
To: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Subject: FW: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 1:51 PM
To: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Cc: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam
<Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>
Subject: CLEARED - points for the Minister for 3:15pm media event. [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) See below.

The WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) is investigating a suspect detection of avian influenza (or bird flu) in a single wild bird found sick in an isolated area in southern Western Australia.

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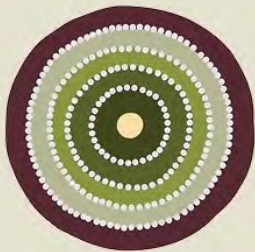
I want to reassure the public that we are well placed to respond to and manage this situation.

We will keep you regularly updated as information comes to hand, and please go to birdflu.gov.au for further information on bird flu.

B.

Dr Brant Smith BVSc, MVPHMgt, MAICD
First Assistant Secretary | Biosecurity Animal Division
National Animal Disease Preparedness Coordinator
Mental Health Champion

s 47F(1) Executive Assistant: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
70 Northbourne Avenue Canberra City ACT 2601
GPO Box 858, Canberra City ACT 2601
daff.gov.au biosecurity.gov.au



We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Supporting Flexibility - if you receive an email from me outside of normal business hours, I'm sending it at a time that suits me. Unless it's marked urgent, I'm not expecting you to read or reply until normal business hours.

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: Lowe, Matt
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 8:52 PM
To: **s 22(1)(a)(ii)**
Cc: Anderson, Victoria; Collins, Monica; Cookson, Beth
Subject: Fw: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii) - advice from CVO below. I will shortly email the Minister.

Matt

OFFICIAL

From: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 20:21:12
To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren <Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>
Cc: **s 47E(d)**
Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Dear all

- I was advised earlier this evening by the WA CVO of a single vagrant skua (species of seabird with known distribution through subantarctic) east of Esperance that has tested positive at WA DPIRD laboratory for H5 Influenza A. The skua was found sick on 14/6 with clinical signs of leg paralysis, weakness and dehydration. It subsequently died overnight after being treated in isolation at Esperance wildlife centre.
- A sick petrel, also with a distribution to subantarctic has also been taken into care at the same wildlife hospital and tested. Preliminary results tomorrow.
- Samples from the skua are en route to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing.
- There are no other reported sick birds or other animals in the vicinity. It is possible that individual infected animals can arrive and not establish infection in local populations, however if confirmed, would raise concern about active pathways.
- Petrels and skuas are known to arrive periodically as vagrant species, any onward spread (if confirmed) is undetermined at this stage.

Next steps

- ACDP need to complete a series of tests before confirmation of the strain of Influenza A will be known.

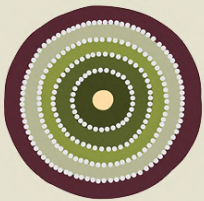
- Samples should arrive from WA tomorrow morning. If this happens as expected, we should have preliminary test results from ACDP by early afternoon tomorrow confirming whether test positive for H5 Influenza A. We will not have confirmation of the strain being high pathogenicity and the clade of concern for another 24-28 hours following this, however I would treat it as highly suspicious that it is the H5 strain of concern given the species and location if ACDP confirm the WA lab results of H5 positive.
- I will work with the WA CVO on the timing for the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease to meet which is the next step. It is likely this will occur after the test results from ACDP are received tomorrow.
- Industry have not been advised. We will do this as part of the CCEAD meeting requests, following ACDP preliminary test results.

I will keep you informed as we have new information. s 47B(a)

We'll prepare media holding lines,
if needed.

Beth.

Dr Beth Cookson BVSc (Hons), EMPA, MANZCVS (Epidemiology)
Chief Veterinary Officer
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
T. s 47F(1) E. beth.cookson@aff.gov.au
agriculture.gov.au



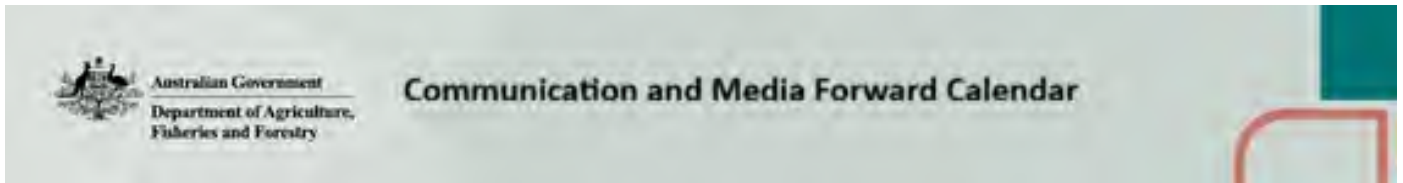
We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 8:20 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii) ; Curran, Carmel; Ipkendanz, Chris
Subject: Communication and Media Forward Calendar - w/c 22 JUNE 2026 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: 20260619 CMB Calendar JUNE-JULY.pdf

OFFICIAL

**Week commencing: 22 June 2026**

NOTE: This reflects the current position as at 19 June 2026 and may be adjusted in response to emerging government, ministerial, policy or external factors.

Coming Week

Confirmed, planned or cancelled/delayed communication and media activities for the week ahead.

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cancelled / Delayed

- PAUSED 24 June – messaging for **H5 bird flu campaign** continues – **BIOSECURITY** focus, nil action

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Cancelled / Delayed

- s 22(1)(a)(ii)
- PAUSED 19 June – messaging for **H5 bird flu campaign** continues – **BIOSECURITY** focus, nil action

Thanks,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Head of Media, Web and Design
Communication and Media Branch
Strategy, Enterprise and Engagement Group
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Ngunnawal Country
Agriculture House, 70 Northbourne Ave, Canberra ACT 2600
Mobile s 22(1)(a)(ii)

***We work flexibly at DAFF.** If you have received an email from me outside of normal business hours, I'm sending it at a time that suits me. I'm not expecting you to read or reply until normal business hours.*

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 47F(1)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 5:26 PM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Re: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Thanks s 22(1)(a)(ii) I know s 47F(1) of Birdlife was keen for an urgent update even over the weekend if possible, so we are happy to be available whenever suits.

s 47F(1)

OFFICIAL

On Fri, 19 Jun 2026 at 17:23, s 22(1)(a)(ii) wrote:

OFFICIAL

Hi s 47F(1)

Thanks for reaching out. It will be me from the biosecurity and agriculture side. Please do let me know when suits. As you can imagine, it's an evolving situation as confirmatory testing needs to be done but we will have more information available as soon as we can.

Kind regards and talk soon,

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

From: s 47F(1)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 17:20:58
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii) ; s 47F(1)
Subject: Fwd: FW: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 47F(1)

Hope you are all well. I'm contacting you all in light of the concerning update below regarding a possible bird flu case in Western Australia.

As you will be aware, AMCS worked closely with Birdlife Australia and Invasive Species Council to get the government to commit to funding for preparedness. It was great to see this ongoing in the latest Federal Budget. We clearly see bird flu as a significant threat to the marine environment and particularly endemic species such as the Australian sea lion and have been keeping our supporters updated.

I understand that Birdlife Australia has sought an urgent briefing on this issue. I'm contacting you all as I'm unsure of the best contacts in Minister Collins and Watts offices on this issue. AMCS would appreciate a briefing at the earliest opportunity, and as more information / testing results come available.

I will be in Parliament Tuesday / Wednesday next week and happy to discuss further then or before, available on the mobile number below.

Thanks

s 47F(1)

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

From: High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Protected Species s 47E(d)

Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:32 PM

Cc: s 47F(1)

High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Protected Species

s 47E(d) ; s 47F(1)

Subject: Suspect H5 bird flu case [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon

We're emailing to let you know that a suspect case of H5 bird flu has been detected. Minister Collins is holding a press conference to share what is currently known, namely that a wild bird with clinical signs has presented in south-west Western Australia.

At this stage, there is no indication of further spread.

With thanks

s 47F(1)

Biodiversity Division | Threatened Species Commissioner Branch| HPAI – Protected Species

Ngunnawal Country, John Gorton Building, King Edward Terrace | GPO Box 3090

ACT 2601

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



Acknowledgement of Country

Our department recognises the First Peoples of this nation and their ongoing connection to culture and country. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Lore Keepers of the world's oldest living culture and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

OFFICIAL

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s 47F(1)

Campaigns Director

Australian Marine Conservation Society

Available Monday - Friday

m: s 47F(1)

p: s 47F(1)

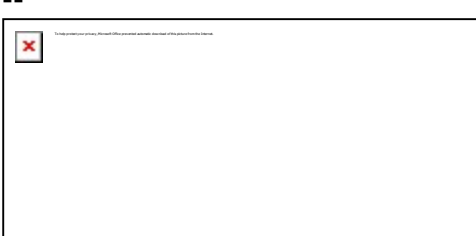
w: marineconservation.org.au

a: Yuggera Turrbal Country, PO Box 5815, West End QLD 4101



Help protect our ocean wildlife by becoming a [Sea Guardian](#) today.

I usually live, meet and work on the land of the Cammeraygal people of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play in caring for land and sea country.



s 47F(1)

Campaigns Director

Australian Marine Conservation Society

Available Monday - Friday

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a: Yuggera Turrbal Country, PO Box 5815, West End QLD 4101



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s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 47F(1)
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:47 AM
To: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: Bird flu TPs [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: Watt, Collins Funding boost to bolster H5 bird flu preparedness (FED).pdf

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

Hi all, some TPs below for the off chance anyone who isn't Julie or Murray gets asked about this one today: [Bird flu kills thousands of baby seals on Heard Island in Southern Ocean - ABC News](#)

The scientific report from the Australian Antarctic Division released today shows that the highly contagious H5 bird flu is impacting more species than previously thought on Heard Island, a remote sub-Antarctic Australian external territory about 4,000km south-west of Western Australia. It also appears to be present on the nearby McDonald Islands, though we don't have testing specimens to confirm that in a lab due to its protected status and remoteness, and are relying on drone footage (worth noting that this advancement in technology is quite extraordinary and will mean we can prepare much better).

The report also reveals there has been significant mortalities of southern elephant seal pups which is believed to be related to bird flu.

While these latest findings are expected based on earlier testing, any loss of wildlife is sobering.

Australia is the only continent that remains free from H5 bird flu, which has rapidly spread globally, primarily through the movement of migratory birds.

These islands are still a long way from our shores, but as it continues to spread globally, we must be realistic about the likelihood of an incursion here, and plan accordingly.

That's why the Albanese Government has invested more than \$113 million to prepare for a possible incursion. The \$11.2 million announced in this year's Budget will focus on invasive species control and habitat improvement across the country, and a focus on eradicating invasive species on Australia's offshore islands.

s 22(1)(a)(ii) Senior Media Advisor

Office of Senator Murray Watt | Labor Senator for Queensland

Minister for the Environment and Water

Electorate s 22(1)(a)(ii) Mob s 22(1)(a)(ii)

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thank you

Have you got any plans today?

If you guys are going out, I think we will need to as well. Would probably be around 3pm

Confirming you are doing presser In TAS?

Edited



Yes

Thanks mate. Good luck and keep it touch. I'll let you know when our plans are confirmed

If you can flick me audio after, that'd be fab

Of course

We will have Min, Dept Head of Biosecurity and our Chief Vet. Can we say type of bird and where



s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Don't mind on type or location

We'd held that because I think your dept was concerned about people going to the site?

The min did mention H5 in the context of the testing - just getting audio

Thanks - I watched it but audio handy to have on hand 😊

we will say where it is because media will think if it's weird. It's remote so that's a good thing

Product Title	Portfolio Area	Purpose	Summary of contribution	Indicative release timing	Expected media interest	Release strategy	Ministerial communication potential
s 22(1)(a)(ii)							

s 47E(d)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Sent: Friday, 19 June 2026 3:49 PM
To: julie.collins.mp@aph.gov.au; Benson, Stuart; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Cc: Anderson, Victoria; Lowe, Matt; Hutchison, Tina; Crosthwaite, Kerren; Collins, Monica; s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: MO-DAFF meeting 23 June - agenda [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Attachments: 23 June 2026 - Minister Collins + MO + DAFF agenda .docx

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Good afternoon

Please find attached the meeting agenda for Tuesday's MO-DAFF meeting; 8.30am in person (Secretary, A/g Deputy Secretary Collins) and online via Teams.

If there is anything else you'd like added to the agenda, please let me know.

Kind regards

s 22(1)(a)(i)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)
Office of the Secretary
s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858, Canberra ACT 2601
agriculture.gov.au



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OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Minister Collins and DAFF Executive**AGENDA**

29 June 2026

8.30am

In person (Secretary, A/g Deputy Secretary Collins) and via MS Teams

	Agenda item	Timing
s 22(1)(a)(ii)		
2	H5 update	5 mins
s 22(1)(a)(ii)		

From: [Hutchison, Tina](#)
To: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Cc: [Black, Tom](#); [McDonald, Andrew](#); [Greenville, Jared](#); [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Subject: FW: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]
Date: Friday, 19 June 2026 8:31:15 AM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.png](#)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

[s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) I understand you have seen the below. As the bird involved is a wild species it doesn't affect our formal health status from a trade perspective (as it has been described to me). It is however likely we will get questions from trading partners if/once there is information in the public domain. We will be prepared to answer questions and respond as required. Regards, Tina

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

From: Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 9:18 PM
To: Minister Collins <Minister.Collins@aff.gov.au>; julie.collins.mp@aph.gov.au
Cc: Benson, Stuart <Stuart.Benson@aff.gov.au>; [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>;
Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>; [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)
Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL:Sensitive]

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Minister,

Further to advice from CVO Beth Cookson below, **key points** to note at this stage are:

- One wildlife vagrant bird (Brown Skua) **has tested positive to H5 Influenza A in a WA laboratory**. This bird has died and a second bird (Petrel) has been taken into care, showing similar symptoms (testing results pending).
- Samples will be provided to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) for confirmatory testing.
- If confirmed, this will be the first positive case of H5 HPAI in Australia, and the implication is that the disease has an arrival pathway in Australia.
- Further testing will confirm if it is the Highly Pathogenetic variety, and if it is the clade that is known to be impacting wild birds around the globe.

Next steps

- WA will lead the response.
- If ACDP testing confirms, the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD)

will be convened to notify them of the report.

- A surveillance plan will need to be implemented.
- We will work with you and your office to advise media and community, with a call to the public to report any sick wildlife.

Will update you further as information becomes available.

Matt Lowe (he/him)

Acting Secretary

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Policy Group

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Email: matt.lowe@aff.gov.au

Ph: s 47F(1)

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

From: Cookson, Beth <Beth.Cookson@aff.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 18 June 2026 8:21 PM

To: Anderson, Victoria <Victoria.Anderson@aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>; Collins, Monica <Monica.Collins@aff.gov.au>; Smith, Brant <Brant.Smith@aff.gov.au>; Finnin, Peter <Peter.Finnin@aff.gov.au>; Crosthwaite, Kerren <Kerren.Crosthwaite@aff.gov.au>; Wellington, Michelle <Michelle.Wellington@aff.gov.au>; Ipkendanz, Chris <Chris.Ipkendanz@aff.gov.au>; Palfreyman, Louise <Louise.Palfreyman@aff.gov.au>; Hamilton, Sam <Sam.Hamilton@aff.gov.au>; Ireland, Cassandra <Cassandra.Ireland@aff.gov.au>

Cc: s 47E(d)

Subject: Suspect H5 positive seabird (skua) in WA coastline [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Importance: High

OFFICIAL

Dear all

- I was advised earlier this evening by the WA CVO of a single vagrant skua (species of seabird with known distribution through subantarctic) east of Esperance that has tested positive at WA DPIRD laboratory for H5 Influenza A. The skua was found sick on 14/6 with clinical signs of leg paralysis, weakness and dehydration. It subsequently died overnight after being treated in isolation at Esperance wildlife centre.
- A sick petrel, also with a distribution to subantarctic has also been taken into care at the same wildlife hospital and tested. Preliminary results tomorrow.
- Samples from the skua are en route to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness for confirmatory testing.
- There are no other reported sick birds or other animals in the vicinity. It is possible that individual infected animals can arrive and not establish infection in local populations, however if confirmed, would raise concern about active pathways.
- Petrels and skuas are known to arrive periodically as vagrant species, any onward spread (if confirmed) is undetermined at this stage.

Next steps

- ACDP need to complete a series of tests before confirmation of the strain of Influenza A will be known.
 - Samples should arrive from WA tomorrow morning. If this happens as expected, we should have preliminary test results from ACDP by early afternoon tomorrow confirming whether test positive for H5 Influenza A. We will not have confirmation of the strain being high pathogenicity and the clade of concern for another 24-28 hours following this, however I would treat it as highly suspicious that it is the H5 strain of concern given the species and location if ACDP confirm the WA lab results of H5 positive.
- I will work with the WA CVO on the timing for the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease to meet which is the next step. It is likely this will occur after the test results from ACDP are received tomorrow.
- Industry have not been advised. We will do this as part of the CCEAD meeting requests, following ACDP preliminary test results.

I will keep you informed as we have new information. **s 47B(a)**

We'll prepare media

holding lines, if needed.

Beth.

Dr Beth Cookson BVSc (Hons), EMPA, MANZCVS (Epidemiology)

Chief Veterinary Officer

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

T. **s 47F(1)** E. beth.cookson@aff.gov.au

agriculture.gov.au



OFFICIAL

10:49

5G



ML



Matt

s 22(1)(a)(ii) s 22(1)(a)(ii)

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thu, 18 Jun at 7:18 pm

Minister - apologies for the late text. We have been notified by WA of a detection of H5 strain in Australia. I am awaiting further information. Once I have that I will need to call and brief you on what we know. Matt

Oh dear - thanks for heads up.

Do we know if its on mainland or an island

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

3:5

s 22(1)(a)(ii)



VA

Vic Anderson

Fri, 10 Apr



Thu, 18 Jun

Hi Minister. Just letting you know Mike Kaiser called me tonight (I left him a voicemail about the potential H5 detection) and he patched in Minister Watt who wanted to know a bit more about it. I briefed Minister Watt based on the information in the email Matt sent to you. He said he left you a message

s 47C and s 47E(d)

s 47C and s 47E(d)

We will no doubt be in touch!

Vic

9:41 pm



Thanks Vic. I did let PM know about 2 hrs ago.

9:43 pm



Yep, Matt has been letting me know



Message



3:58



VA

Vic Anderson



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s 47C and s 47E(d)

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We will no doubt be in touch!

Vic

9:41 pm



Thanks Vic. I did let PM know about 2 hrs ago.

9:43 pm



Yep, Matt has been letting me know. PMC also in the loop.

9:47 pm



s 22(1)(a)(ii)

CONFIDENTIAL

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**HOT ISSUES BRIEFS
JUNE-JULY 2026**

Contact: [s 22\(1\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)



MINISTER COLLINS
HOT ISSUES BRIEFS
MAY 2026

s 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Biosecurity – Avian Flu

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BIOSECURITY – AVIAN FLU

Since coming to Government in 2022 the Albanese Labor Government has been investing in and strengthening our vital biosecurity system.

Australia remains the only continent on earth free of the devastating H5N1 strain of avian influenza – but as it is transmitted by migratory birds we are unlikely to stay that way forever.

Late last year, I announced that Australian scientists had **confirmed the presence of the H5 bird flu in samples collected from seals on Heard Island, an Australian territory** in the remote sub-Antarctic region, more than 4000km south-west of Perth.

On the most recent Antarctic voyage which returned in February, scientists have confirmed H5 bird flu in additional species including the southern elephant seal, Antarctic fur seal and gentoo penguin.

Given the known presence of this virus nearby on the French sub-Antarctic islands, these results are not unexpected, and the detection does not substantially increase the risk to Australia from current levels.

The Albanese Government is not complacent, which is why we are stepping up national preparedness for a potential incursion.

We have invested more than \$100 million to focus on the threats posed by avian influenza, as part of the more than \$2 billion in biosecurity funding our Government has invested.

I've been lucky enough to visit Raptor Refuge in my electorate, one of 26 wildlife facilities we are supporting with funding to prepare and protect our threatened species from the risks of H5.

Farmers and people with pet birds or back yard chickens can also take steps to prepare and to protect their birds.

BIOSECURITY – AVIAN FLU

If you notice sick or dead birds or animals, you should not touch them. Further information can be found on the website birdflu.gov.au

The situation remains dynamic and the Albanese Government is committed to provide an agile inter-governmental, industry and community response to protect Australian industry, trade and wildlife.

Current preparations for H5N1 Avian Flu

To date, the Albanese Government has:

- invested more than \$100 million into further HPAI preparedness
- established a dedicated multi-portfolio taskforce to ensure a whole-of-government approach to this threat
- activated the National Coordination Mechanism to support national H5N1 preparedness activities
- delivered a series of 3 national HPAI exercises as part of 'Exercise Volare' which simulated a detection of H5N1 in wildlife in Australia.
- Contributed to research currently underway with the Australian Antarctic Division to learn more about potential H5 detections on remote Heard and McDonald Islands.

We are very concerned about the impact this disease could have on our native wildlife, vulnerable threatened species and broader environment and on our agricultural systems, including on production and trade.

The Albanese Government is not complacent about the risk of H5 Bird Flu, which is why we are stepping up and securing our national preparedness for a potential incursion.

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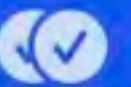
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Thu, 18 Jun

keen to understand how many chicken farms are in the region and the potential chicken meat/egg supply disruptions

^from s 47F(1)

9:18 pm



Yep, will request. 9:18 pm

Short answer is very little large scale providers of either eggs or meat chickens. Am getting more information on the small/mid size operators but I don't think there are a lot.

9:22 pm

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Text Message • SMS
Thu, 18 Jun at 7:26 pm

Minister - apologies for the late text. We have been notified by WA of a detection of H5 strain in Australia. I am awaiting further information. Once I have that I will need to call and brief you on what we know. Matt Lowe

iMessage

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