



25 March 2026

## Avian influenza vaccination pilot studies in non-poultry species

Animal Health Committee

### Introduction

Animal Health Committee (AHC) has approved avian influenza vaccination pilot studies in Australia using an inactivated avian influenza vaccine. The vaccine will be administered to a limited number of (non-poultry) birds held in captivity. These pilot studies will provide safety and efficacy data, in addition to that provided by the manufacturer, to inform the potential use of this avian influenza vaccine to protect rare, protected and valuable bird species in the event of an H5 avian influenza (bird flu) outbreak.

Vaccination of commercial or backyard poultry is not permitted under the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) emergency use permit as of March 2026, and no commercial or backyard poultry will be included in the vaccination pilot studies.

### What is a vaccination pilot study?

- A pilot study is a preliminary or small-scale test of a procedure before it is used more widely. In this case, we are assessing the safety and efficacy of inactivated avian influenza vaccine(s) in (non-poultry) bird species.
- Pilot vaccination studies will comply with the AHC policy for the [Use of avian influenza vaccines for the protection of rare, protected and valuable avian species](#).
- Pilot vaccination study proposals will be developed by state and territory governments, in collaboration with facilities holding relevant bird collections. Following AHC approval of a proposal, the pilot vaccination study will be conducted in appropriate captive facilities and under the supervision of a veterinarian.
- Pilot vaccination studies are also subject to approval by relevant animal welfare and ethics committees.
- A limited number of birds (less than 50% of birds per collection/location) will be vaccinated with the inactivated H5 bird flu vaccine. Study data will include:
  - close observation for any side effects after vaccination such as illness and swelling or other reactions at the vaccination site.
  - determination of immune response by measuring blood antibody levels in vaccinated birds.

### Purpose

- The main purpose of the vaccination pilot studies is to provide safety data on the use of inactivated avian influenza vaccine(s) in a variety of bird species that weigh more than 150 grams.
- This information is needed to address current APVMA vaccine permit restrictions ahead of potential wider use of the vaccine in non-poultry bird collections.
- The pilot studies will provide information on the immune response of different bird species in response to the vaccine.

- A variety of vaccination pilot studies are required. The species and facilities involved in pilots reflect availability, feasibility and compliance with the AHC policy.
- Data from the vaccination pilot studies will be provided to the APVMA to inform decision-making around future emergency use permits for these vaccines.

### **Why do we need safety data for non-poultry species?**

- Avian influenza vaccines are manufactured and labelled for use in poultry. There is very limited data on their use in species of birds other than poultry.
- Data gained from the vaccination pilot studies aims to provide assurance that these vaccines could be safely used in different bird species.

### **Other activities**

- The Australian Government is actively working through regulatory and policy arrangements for the potential vaccination of some rare, protected or valuable bird species to help protect them in the event of a H5 bird flu outbreak in Australia.
- An inactivated H5 bird flu vaccine (that contains no live virus) has been purchased for the emergency vaccination of bird species other than poultry.
- Vaccine trials commissioned by the Australian Government have been undertaken in a research facility to provide safety data for vaccine use in small (less than 150 grams) Australian birds (non-poultry). Further research will be conducted to determine the best doses for small birds and to ensure that vaccination is both safe and effective.

Any decision to vaccinate rare, protected or valuable bird species will be made with appropriate Commonwealth and state/territory authorisation and will be informed by available science and evidence. Vaccination will most likely be used to protect threatened species held in captive breeding facilities, although it could potentially be applied in other specific situations.

The broadscale vaccination of birds in the wild is not considered appropriate or feasible.

Avian influenza vaccination is not currently permitted for poultry in Australia. However, global attitudes to vaccination as a complementary tool for the management of avian influenza, are shifting and this issue is actively being discussed by both governments and industry in Australia.

### **More information**

Learn more about the [Animal Health Committee](#).

Email [ahc@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:ahc@agriculture.gov.au)

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

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.

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