



Aim: To ensure preparedness of agriculture, environment, health portfolios, their sector-specific stakeholders and other agencies to manage future HPAI incursions, and to inform management of H5N1 HPAI across wildlife, livestock industries and health.

Objectives

- 1 **Ensure situational awareness** of the HPAI situation globally, and the risks and likely consequences of H5 HPAI entering Australia.
- 2 **Coordination of response: Clarify and confirm** roles and responsibilities and authority of agencies in a coordinated response to a detection of H5 HPAI in animals in Australia.
- 3 **Clarify gaps in arrangements and strategies to support response: Assess** concepts for funding a national response to a H5 HPAI outbreak in wildlife, with or without subsequent spillover into domestic animal populations and/or human health.
- 4 **Public Information and crisis communication: A) Identify** possible community concerns, and actions to mitigate them, following detection of H5 HPAI in Australia, and **B) explore** public information needs, roles and responsibilities across all jurisdictions and sector-specific stakeholders to achieve unity of effort.

Hypothetical scenario

Detection of a mass mortality event in wild birds, silver gulls, in the Coorong National Park, South Australia. Suspected and then confirmed to be H5N1 HPAI clade 2.3.4.4b. Soon after the initial detection, H5N1 HPAI clade 2.3.4.4b is confirmed in sea lions and other wild birds including penguins in the Coorong region and on Kangaroo Island. It is also posing a risk to human health as people try to help animals.

Assumptions

- Cannot prevent entry of the virus via migratory birds and may not detect it immediately.
- Eradication in wildlife is unlikely.
- The response will be coordinated nationally and delivered locally.
- Existing biosecurity arrangements provide the response architecture.
- Our immediate priorities will include national shared situational awareness and integrated communications.

Exercise 2 21 Aug 2024

- **Approx no. of attendees:** 120
- **Participants:** Commonwealth, state and territory government reps across environment, agriculture & health portfolios
- **Observers:** Wildlife Health Australia and Animal Health Australia

Webinar 4 Oct 2024

- **Approx no. of attendees:** >1,000
- **Participants:** Everyone
- **Recording:** [Exercise Volare \(2024\) - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](https://www.daff.gov.au/exercise-volare-2024)

Exercise 1 15 Aug 2024

- **Approx no. of attendees:** 50
- **Participants:** Commonwealth cross-sectoral Inter-departmental Committee

Exercise 3 9 Sep 2024

- **Approx no. of attendees:** 160
- **Participants:** Commonwealth, state and territory govts and key stakeholders from industries and non-gov organisations

Key themes and opportunities



The following key themes and associated opportunities were identified from discussions during Exercise Volare, each aimed at strengthening Australia's preparedness and response capabilities for H5N1 HPAI.

1 Complex, cross-sectoral response arrangements

Build on existing and well-established biosecurity frameworks, including aligning these frameworks across the sectors and jurisdictions to support resource sharing and decision-making.

Agriculture departments are positioned as the primary response agency in both agriculture and wildlife across jurisdictions, and provide for an initial response through established biosecurity arrangements

2 Strengthen inter-agency systems for coordination and collaboration

Leverage and build on existing frameworks (operational, communications, governance, shared situational awareness mechanisms), and extend them in a flexible way to other agencies or layers of government that are not currently captured.

3 Alignment of concurrent emergency management mechanisms

Strengthen systems for coordination and collaboration across a 'One Health' approach at the national, Commonwealth and jurisdictional levels. This will improve alignment of concurrent emergency management mechanisms.

4 Increase environmental preparedness

Enhance environmental preparedness and response through tailored site and species-specific plans, vaccination policy, and clear guidelines for handling, testing and disposal of wildlife including mass mortality events.

5 Strengthen communications, public information and stakeholder engagement

Strengthen cross agency communication, information and intelligence sharing between agencies to ensure consistent public messaging and integrated or complementary systems noting the need to move early in crisis communications

Tailored public messaging and bespoke communications targeted to key stakeholders. Consult relevant non-government organisations as necessary for public messaging.

A communications framework containing principles and processes that can be applied across the Commonwealth and state and territories.

Publicly available prioritisation framework that outlines Australian Government preparedness and response goals.

Public webpage/dashboard to provide important and real-time information.

Apply lessons from COVID-19 around communication fatigue and ensuring information is delivered when needed.

National communication exercise across agencies and portfolios to test and refine current communication strategies and frameworks.

6 Integrate resourcing and partnership approaches

Integrate resources and partnerships by leveraging existing networks to optimise response capabilities.

Explore solutions for surge workforce needs, such as fee-for-service models, particularly through collaboration with Indigenous Protected Area (IPA) managers, Sea Country Managers, and Ranger Groups.

Utilise volunteers to supplement workforce capacity and provide additional support where needed using a coordinated approach.

7 Indigenous engagement

Coordinate communication efforts and information sharing information sharing across relevant agencies, including, for **the National Indigenous Australians Agency** to ensure cultural and practical considerations for Indigenous communities are fully addressed.

8 Build on surveillance and diagnostic arrangements

Enhance existing surveillance and diagnostics to manage human health and biosecurity risks from mortality events in wildlife and production, including humane depopulation methods.

Strengthen inter-agency collaboration which could include a unified surveillance system for data sharing, enabling quicker detection of H5 HPAI and timely interventions to protect domestic species.



The following have been identified as a set of key actions aimed at addressing the findings and themes explored during Exercise Volare. Many of these actions have commenced or have been long-standing preparedness activities.



Surveillance

Boost surveillance through Wildlife Health Australia's One Health Surveillance Initiative and the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance program.



Data, mapping & modelling

Develop a publicly available dashboard that provides a single source of truth for all HPAI information.

Collect data, mapping and modelling, including undertaking a wildlife susceptibility analysis.



Stakeholder engagement

Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and understanding of cultural values into the process of informing and prioritising preparedness and response actions.

Communicate strategic priorities publicly so stakeholders can understand why certain actions are being undertaken in certain areas.

Clarify the role of non-government organisations such as captive breeding facilities, natural resource managers and other relevant organisations.



Site- and species-specific planning

Specific planning for external territories and islands including governance arrangements, on-ground capacity, capability building and triggers for decision making.

Update the animal health vaccination policy which outlines the opportunities and risks with vaccinations and the very specific scenarios in which they may be utilised.

Develop carcass management principles with relevant state and territory government agencies with clear guidelines and principles for safe and scalable carcass management for wildlife and poultry.



Governance and coordination mechanisms

Specific planning for the Commonwealth to ensure capacity and capability assessment and uplift is supported.

Explore governance and funding arrangements for One Health responses that include the environment, agriculture and health sectors – for response/containment.

Develop a draft response plan to bring together the current biosecurity framework into a potential response framework and national agreement.

Develop decision trigger points to help determine how activities and resources should be deployed and when.



Communications strategy

Map current governance communication arrangements, agency responsibilities and communication protocols across the key Commonwealth and jurisdictional agencies to determine where there are gaps and overlap.

Conduct a comms specific national exercise that includes relevant communications representatives across agriculture, environment and health to test communication frameworks.

Develop communication strategies for both preparedness and response (preparedness strategy underway) that provides the plan for national communications, key messages, communication formats and governance.

Establish a cross-agency communication and intelligence sharing framework for communication and information sharing between agencies. This could include a system that enables real-time intelligence exchange.



Guidance material

Develop nationally agreed principles to coordinate volunteers in an outbreak response.

Animal Health Australia review of **AUSVETPLAN** for avian influenza including incorporating wildlife considerations.