



Australian Government

H5 bird flu - public guidance for disposal of dead wildlife



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Acknowledgment 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.

Document control

This document is maintained by the Environmental Biosecurity Office in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

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1.0	8 September 2025	Document created

About this document

All information contained in the sections **'about this document'** and **'glossary'** are for use by Commonwealth and jurisdictional governments, and communications officers.

These sections **DO NOT** form part of the key messaging to the public

At the time of preparing this guidance, Australia remains free from H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza (H5 bird flu). If the status of H5 bird flu in animals in Australia changes, it will be reported on outbreak.gov.au.

Who should use this document and when: Commonwealth and state and territory governments may use this document to develop messaging and guidance for the Australian public- noting states and territories may tailor information to suit their regulations and policies. The messaging/guidance developed by governments should then be disseminated to the public following a confirmed case of H5 bird flu in animals in Australia. State and territory governments are encouraged to work with local governments to support consistent public advice across their jurisdiction as far as is practicable. This document is not intended for direct communication to the public.

Purpose: This document has been developed to support state and territory governments to develop nationally consistent advice for the Australian public. The document covers what the public should do if they need to dispose of dead wildlife which they have found on their own land following a confirmed case of H5 bird flu in Australia. This document builds on the Public Guidelines that provides general advice to members of the public to avoid, record and report multiple dead birds or other animals. The advice in this document is intended to be used in situations where the 'avoid, record, report' message may not be applicable and members of the public may need to dispose of dead wildlife themselves. For example, dead wildlife found in backyards where children and pets play.

In-scope:

- ◆ Disposal of dead wildlife on private land within the context of H5 bird flu having been confirmed in animals in Australia.
- ◆ Processes and public communications that provide a nationally consistent basis for jurisdictions to build upon.

Out of scope:

- ◆ Production animals
- ◆ Companion animals
- ◆ Sick, live animals
- ◆ Disposal of dead wildlife at workplaces or by trained personnel
- ◆ Disposal of dead animals euthanised with barbiturates
- ◆ Processes, principles or public communications that may conflict with individual jurisdictional preparations, legislation, arrangements or processes
- ◆ Defining or implying responsibilities of jurisdictions or agencies, including support roles.

Disclaimer: This document is envisaged support but does not replace or supersede any Commonwealth or jurisdictional legislation, including acts, regulations or other requirements. This document is intended to provide high-level advice for the purpose of national consistency. Detailed operational-level information may vary across Australia and be context-specific and should be sought from the relevant state or territory government agency. Bird flu viruses can rapidly change to cause more serious disease in people or spread more easily from animals to people. Engage your relevant state, territory or Commonwealth health department before publishing messaging based on this guidance, to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Glossary

Glossary of terms as intended throughout this document.

Term	Definition
Australian public	Australian public, as used in this document, refers to any person who is not formally employed, in a paid or voluntary context, to manage carcasses per their jurisdictional response arrangements or guidance.
Carcass	Whole or partial body of a dead animal.
Clean and disinfect;	Cleaning and disinfecting is a 2-step process.
Cleaning and disinfecting	Cleaning physically removes most germs, dirt, and impurities from items, and involves using soap or detergent with water to scrub, wash, and rinse. Disinfecting uses products to reduce the remaining germs on surfaces.
Contaminated; Contaminated environment	An environment, for example on land or in water, which is considered contaminated because of the presence of wildlife infected with H5 bird flu and/or that have secreted and/or excreted into the surrounding environment.
Wildlife	Wildlife means: Native species (e.g. birds and mammals) that are free ranging independently of direct human supervision or control in Australia, and Non-native species including invasive species, that are free ranging independently of direct human supervision or control in Australia.

Below commences key messages for the Australian public

When to use this guidance

This guidance is designed to assist state and territory governments to develop advice for the Australian public, for use in situations where the public choose to dispose of dead wildlife. It should be used if H5 avian influenza H5N1 (H5 bird flu) is found in animals in Australia.

This guidance assumes that all dead wildlife could be infected with H5 bird flu, and the precautions included in this guidance are to manage the risk infected carcasses pose to people.

At the time of preparing this guidance, Australia remains free from H5 bird flu in animals. If this changes, it will be reported on outbreak.gov.au.

Following these guidelines will reduce your risk of catching H5 bird flu when disposing of dead wildlife.

Know the risks of H5 bird flu for humans

Bird flu viruses rarely spread to people, but it can happen through close contact with infected animals (alive or dead) or, less commonly, places they have contaminated.

- ◆ In recent reports, most human infections have been mild, but in some cases people have become very sick and have died.
- ◆ To date, there have been no reports of human to human spread of H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b.

Know the risks of H5 bird flu for animals

- ◆ H5 bird flu may be fatal for animals such as birds and some mammals. Animals can catch the virus from other infected animals, carcasses, animal droppings, contaminated food and water, and contaminated environments.

Avoid, record and report dead wildlife

If you have found **5 or more sick or dead birds or other animals of the same species**, report it via the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888**

Check your state or territory government website for information on reporting. Some states and/or territories request that reports are made to the Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Hotline for even a single sick or dead animal of certain species.

Reporting is important so that your state or territory can assess the situation and decide if there is a need to further investigate. Reporting also helps us understand wildlife health across the country.

Where possible, avoid contact with dead wildlife by leaving them to decompose where they are found. Touching dead wildlife, without the necessary precautions, may impact your own health. It can also disturb other wildlife.

There may be situations where dead wildlife cannot be left where found

You may decide the dead wildlife cannot be left where found.

This guidance may be used if **you have found dead wildlife on private land**, such as in your backyard.

This guidance is **NOT** meant for use where dead wildlife is found in public places or workplaces. However, you might choose to use this advice in public places if:

- ◆ The dead wildlife is in a location you need to access immediately.
- ◆ The dead wildlife is blocking access to your private property.

Guidance and requirements about the disposal of dead wildlife may vary between and within states and territories.

Prior to taking any action, you should check your state or territory government website for information.

Checklist for disposing of dead wildlife

If you decide to dispose of dead wildlife, refer to this checklist to take steps to protect yourself, other people, and animals:

DO:

- ✓ **Consider your physical safety.** For example, is the dead wildlife in a place you can reach easily and can you lift it safely?
- ✓ **Limit access to the area** where the dead wildlife is located, and keep domestic animals, children and other people away.
- ✓ **Wear personal protective equipment (PPE)** – disposable, waterproof gloves, long-sleeved clothing, a well-fitted surgical face mask (or a P2/N95 respirator mask, if available and you are trained in its use) and eye protection.
- ✓ **Wash or sanitise your hands** before and after disposal, and after cleaning.
 - » **Wash your hands thoroughly** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dry.
 - » If you can't wash your hands immediately, use **alcohol-based hand sanitiser** until you can. Rub your hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds or until dry.
 - » See <http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/hand-washing>
- ✓ **Wash** clothing and **clean** and **disinfect** any shoes, reusable equipment or other potentially contaminated items.

DO NOT:

- × Do not touch dead wildlife (or anything it may have touched) with your bare skin. Wash or sanitise your skin if contact occurs.
- × Do not touch your face or put any item near your mouth until your PPE is removed and your hands have been thoroughly washed or sanitised.
- × Do not take dead wildlife indoors or store dead wildlife in your fridge or freezer.
- × If burying dead wildlife, after burial, do not re-use or re-open the burial hole.

How to dispose of dead wildlife by double bagging and placing in your general waste bin

If you have a small number of dead wildlife that are small in size (i.e. they will comfortably fit into a leakproof plastic bag and your general waste bin) on your land, disposal by double bagging and placing in your general waste bin may be possible.

Double bagging prevents leaks and reduces smells. It also reduces the risk of disease spreading to people and other animals or contaminating the environment.

If you have found **5 or more sick or dead birds or other animals of the same species** report it via the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888**

Following these guidelines will reduce your risk of catching H5 bird flu when disposing of dead wildlife.

Gather the following items before you start

- ◆ Personal protective equipment (PPE) including:
 - Disposable, waterproof gloves (a plastic bag fully covering each hand can be used as makeshift hand protection)
 - Long-sleeved clothing (water resistant, if available)
 - A well-fitted surgical face mask (or a P2/N95 respirator, if available and you are trained in its use)
 - Eye protection such as goggles or safety glasses (sunglasses or spectacles may be used as makeshift eye protection)
- ◆ Soap and running water for hand washing (preferable) or alcohol-based hand sanitiser (60-80% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol)
- ◆ Three leakproof plastic bags (e.g. rubbish bin liners)
 - Two leakproof plastic bags large enough to completely enclose the dead wildlife
 - One leakproof plastic bag (for PPE disposal after cleaning)
- ◆ A tool (optional- like a dustpan, garden trowel or shovel)
- ◆ Strong tape or string
- ◆ Soap/household detergent and water for cleaning equipment
- ◆ Disinfectant such as household bleach (Sodium hypochlorite) or a disinfectant that states it kills viruses on its label

Pick up and bag the dead wildlife

- ◆ Put on all of your PPE.
- ◆ Place the dead wildlife in a leakproof plastic bag (don't let the wildlife touch the outside of the bag) by:
 - Putting the bag over your gloved hands, grasping the dead wildlife through the bag, then turning the bag inside out to completely enclose the dead wildlife inside, or
 - Using a shovel or other tool to gently lift the dead wildlife, and soil it is touching, into the bag.
- ◆ Tie up the bag.

Double bag it, take off PPE, and dispose

Wash or sanitise your hands after each step

- ◆ **Remove gloves** by carefully turning them inside out (don't touch the outside of the gloves with bare skin) and put on top of the first bag.
- ◆ **Double bag it** – put the second bag over your hands, scoop up the first bag and used gloves (with dead wildlife inside), then turn the bag inside out to completely enclose.
- ◆ **Take off the eye protection** by holding the straps/earpieces towards the back/side of your head (don't touch the front). Put with other reusable items, ready for cleaning and disinfection.
- ◆ **Take off the face mask** using the ear loops/straps (don't touch the front) and put it in the second bag too.
- ◆ **Tie up the second bag with tape or string to securely seal the bag shut.**
- ◆ **Dispose of the bag in your outdoor, lidded general waste bin straight away.**
- ◆ **Take off your shoes** (before going inside) and put with other reusable items ready for cleaning and disinfection.

Clean up

Start the clean-up process immediately after removing your PPE. Wear a new pair of gloves for cleaning up. After completing the following steps, dispose of gloves in the third plastic bag, tie the bag shut, and place in your outdoor, lidded general waste bin, and wash or sanitise hands afterwards.

- ◆ **Clean shoes, reusable equipment (including eye protection) and any contaminated items** with detergent and water to remove all visible material.
- ◆ **Disinfect these items** and let them dry completely, taking care to follow the manufacturer's instructions including required contact time with cleaning or disinfecting agents.
- ◆ **Wash your clothes** in a washing machine with laundry detergent on the hottest cycle appropriate for the material.

If you cannot clean and disinfect re-usable items immediately, **seal them in a plastic bag** until you can.

How to dispose of dead wildlife by burial – for dead wildlife found on your own property

If you have a small number of dead wildlife that are small in size (i.e. you can comfortably dig a hole to fit them), disposal by burial on your own property may be possible.

If you are not the property owner, you should leave the wildlife where it is found. If you think the wildlife needs to be disposed of by burial, you should seek permission from the property owner before taking any action. It may be an offence to bury dead wildlife on land you do not own or manage.

Always consider your own physical health and safety before taking action, such as whether you are able to dig a burial pit to a depth of at least 60cm. This depth is necessary as it reduces the risk of pets and other animals, such as foxes, digging up the dead wildlife, but may be challenging to achieve in many soils.

If possible and you are physically able, after burying the dead wildlife, place large, heavy rocks (or other suitable covering) on top of the burial pit to reduce the risk of pets and other animals such as foxes digging up the dead wildlife

If you have found **5 or more sick or dead birds or other animals of the same species** report it via the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline** on **1800 675 888**

Following these guidelines will reduce your risk of catching H5 bird flu when disposing of dead wildlife.

Gather the following items before you start

- ◆ Personal protective equipment (PPE) including:
 - Disposable, waterproof gloves (a plastic bag fully covering each hand can be used as makeshift hand protection).
 - Long-sleeved clothing (water resistant, if available).
 - A well-fitted surgical face mask (or a P2/N95 respirator, if available and you are trained in its use).
 - Eye protection such as goggles or safety glasses (sunglasses or spectacles may be used as makeshift eye protection).
- ◆ Soap and running water for hand washing (preferable) or appropriate alcohol-based hand sanitiser (60-80% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol).
- ◆ Two leakproof plastic bags (for PPE disposal).
- ◆ A garden shovel or other appropriate tool(s) for digging the burial hole and moving the dead wildlife.
- ◆ Soap/household detergent and water for cleaning equipment.
- ◆ Disinfectant such as household bleach (Sodium hypochlorite) or a disinfectant that states it kills viruses on its label.

Dig a burial pit

- ◆ Choose a suitable location on your property to bury the dead wildlife that is:
 - close to where the dead wildlife is found.
 - away from your house, animal enclosures, food growing areas (e.g. vegetable patch) or where children or pets spend time.
 - away from any natural sources of water (for example, creek, dam or lake) or where it could contaminate local water supplies.
- ◆ If you do not have a suitable burial location on your property, refer to the other disposal options acceptable for your location.
- ◆ If you're not sure whether there are underground cables or pipes in the burial location chosen, call the relevant organisation for information before you start digging.
- ◆ Dig a hole to a depth of at least 60cm and a sufficient size to fit the dead wildlife.

Pick up and bury the dead wildlife

- ◆ Put on all of your PPE.
- ◆ Use a shovel or other tool to gently lift the dead wildlife, and soil it is touching, and carry it to the burial pit.
- ◆ Gently place the dead wildlife into the pit.
- ◆ Bury immediately by filling the pit with all removed earth.
- ◆ Do NOT bury the dead wildlife in a plastic bag as it prevents microbes in the soil from helping the dead wildlife decompose.

Carefully take off PPE

Wash or sanitise your hands after each step.

- ◆ Remove gloves by carefully turning them inside out (don't touch the outside of the gloves with bare skin) and put in the leakproof plastic bag (don't let the gloves touch the outside of the bag).
- ◆ Take off the eye protection by holding the straps/earpieces towards the back/side of your head (don't touch the front). Put with other reusable items, ready for cleaning and disinfection.
- ◆ Take off the face mask using the ear loops/straps (don't touch the front) and put it in the bag (don't let the mask touch the outside of the bag).
- ◆ Tie up the bag with the used, disposable PPE inside the bag.
- ◆ Dispose of the bagged PPE in your outdoor, lidded general waste bin straight away.
- ◆ Take off your shoes (before going inside) and put with other reusable items ready for cleaning and disinfection.

Clean up

Start the clean-up process immediately after removing your PPE. Wear a new pair of gloves for cleaning up. After completing the following steps, dispose of gloves in a plastic bag, seal and place in your outdoor, lidded general waste bin, and wash or sanitise hands afterwards.

- ◆ **Clean shoes, reusable equipment (including eye protection) and any contaminated items** by scrubbing with detergent and water to remove all visible material.
- ◆ **Disinfect these items** and let them dry completely, taking care to follow the manufacturer's instructions including required contact time with cleaning or disinfecting agents.
- ◆ **Wash your clothes** in a washing machine with laundry detergent on the hottest cycle appropriate for the material.

If you cannot clean and disinfect re-usable items immediately, **seal them in a plastic bag** until you can.

What if I feel unwell after disposing of dead wildlife?

Bird flu infections in people are rare but can happen if a person has had close contact with an infected animal or contaminated environment.

Monitor for symptoms for 10 days after contact with dead wildlife or their contaminated environment.

If you are infected, you might not show any symptoms, or you might get one or more symptoms such as:

- ◆ fever
- ◆ cough
- ◆ sore throat
- ◆ runny or blocked nose
- ◆ red, sore eyes or conjunctivitis
- ◆ muscle or body aches
- ◆ fatigue
- ◆ shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ◆ pneumonia.

Less common signs and symptoms can include:

- ◆ nausea
- ◆ vomiting
- ◆ diarrhoea
- ◆ seizures.

If you feel unwell with any of the above symptoms after having close contact with dead wildlife, you should:

- ◆ **Call your doctor** and tell them that you have been around dead wildlife that were potentially infected with H5 bird flu.
- ◆ **Stay home** while you are unwell.
- ◆ **Wear a mask** to protect others.
- ◆ **Stay away from other people** as much as possible. If you can't stay away from others, wearing a mask is even more important.
- ◆ **Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue** and dispose of used tissues in the bin straight away (then wash your hands).
- ◆ **Wash your hands** with soap and water often, especially after coughing or sneezing.

For more information, you can visit the [Department of Health, Disability and Aging – Bird Flu](#)

Protect other animals

After you have disposed of the dead wildlife, you should remove and wash clothing, clean and disinfect shoes and other contaminated items, and wash your hands with soap **BEFORE** interacting with other people, poultry, kept birds or pets such as birds, cats or dogs. You may also want to take a shower.

If you wish to take extra precautionary steps, you could avoid close contact with kept birds and poultry for 48 hours after handling dead wildlife which might have H5 bird flu.

Be alert around your property

- ◆ Continue to monitor for sick or dead wildlife.
- ◆ If you notice additional sick or dead wildlife around your property (5 or more of the same species), **report them to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888**. When reporting, let the hotline operator know the details of the dead wildlife of which you have already disposed of. This will help inform what actions should be taken.
- ◆ Biosecurity is everyone's responsibility. For more information about Australia's biosecurity rules for pests, diseases and weeds, visit [Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website](https://www.daff.gov.au)

Stay informed with reliable sources

[BirdFlu.gov.au](https://birdflu.gov.au)

[Protecting domestic poultry and birds – including signs of H5 bird flu](#)

