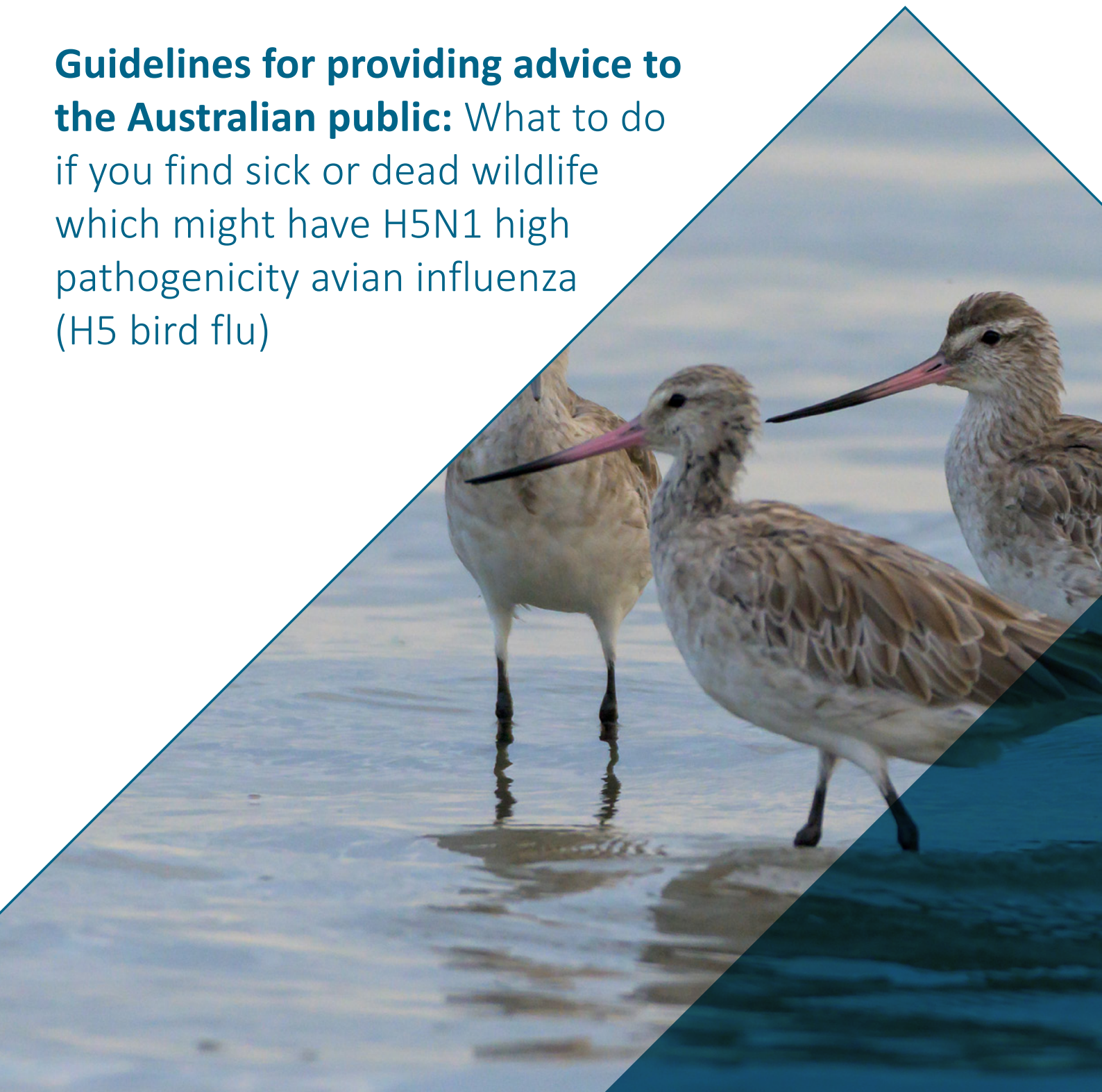




Australian Government

H5 bird flu - public guidelines for carcass management

Guidelines for providing advice to the Australian public: What to do if you find sick or dead wildlife which might have H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza (H5 bird flu)



© Commonwealth of Australia 2025

Ownership of intellectual property rights

Unless otherwise noted, copyright (and any other intellectual property rights) in this publication is owned by the Commonwealth of Australia (referred to as the Commonwealth).

Creative Commons licence

All material in this publication is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) except content supplied by third parties, logos and the Commonwealth Coat of Arms.



Cataloguing data

This publication (and any material sourced from it) should be attributed as: DAFF 2025, *Preparing for H5 Bird Flu*, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra, October . CC BY 4.0.

This publication is available at [agriculture.gov.au/\[title\]](https://agriculture.gov.au/).

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601

Telephone 1800 900 090

Web agriculture.gov.au

Disclaimer

The Australian Government acting through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has exercised due care and skill in preparing and compiling the information and data in this publication. Notwithstanding, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, its employees and advisers disclaim all liability, including liability for negligence and for any loss, damage, injury, expense or cost incurred by any person as a result of accessing, using or relying on any of the information or data in this publication to the maximum extent permitted by law.

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.

Version	Date of issue	Reason for change
1.0	8 September 2025	Document created



About this document

At the time of preparing these guidelines, 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

Purpose: These guidelines have been developed to support Commonwealth and jurisdictional governments in the development of nationally consistent advice that can be effectively targeted to the Australian public. The guideline covers what the Australian public should do if they encounter sick or dead wildlife in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of H5 bird flu in Australia.

Intended audience: The information in this document is intended to be used to inform the Australian public. This includes people who find sick or dead wildlife on private or public land or water. These people could range from having no regular contact with wildlife, through to people with regular wildlife contact such as bird watchers or tourism operators.

Sick or dead wildlife are within the scope of the guideline. The guideline is not designed to provide advice for sick or dead livestock or companion animals.

The guideline is intended to be a living document.

Glossary

Glossary of terms as they are meant 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 jurisdiction's response arrangements or guidance.
Carcass	Whole or partial body of a dead animal.
Contaminated; Contaminated environment	An environment, for example on land or in water, which is considered contaminated because of the presence of wildlife which are 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

What to do if you see sick or dead wildlife

Avoid, record and report sick or dead wildlife

(1) Avoid, (2) Record, and (3) Report

if you have found 5 or more sick or dead birds or other animals of the same species.

Report 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.

1. Avoid

AVOID direct or indirect contact with sick or dead wildlife and their environments and;
AVOID visiting places where H5 bird flu has been confirmed.

- ◆ Sick or dead wildlife and other animals may be affected by H5 bird flu. The best way to prevent spread of the virus is to not touch, approach, or allow pets near sick or dead wildlife.
- ◆ Wildlife affected by H5 bird flu are very unlikely to recover.
 - Sick wildlife should not be handled or cared for by the public.
 - In some rare or limited cases, treatment by veterinarians, wildlife professionals, or zoos may be appropriate, but this will be determined by your state/territory's animal health authority.
 - There are limited supportive care options that can be administered to sick wildlife. Rescue or supportive care should not be attempted except by personnel who are trained and authorised to carry out activities safely for wildlife and for people.
 - Sick wildlife may be distressed. Keeping your distance will help to prevent further distress.
- ◆ 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.

More information about human health can be found at: [Department of Health, Disability and Aging – Bird Flu](#)

2. Record

RECORD what you observed, but do not approach sick or dead wildlife specifically to collect this information.

If possible, do this from a distance using binoculars and/or cameras.

Information which is useful to record may include:

- ◆ Date and time
- ◆ Location (intersecting streets/trail number etc.)
- ◆ A GPS location or pin drop (especially in remote areas), if possible
- ◆ Species, type/s, or descriptions of wildlife affected
- ◆ Estimated number of sick/dead wildlife
- ◆ Signs of illness or condition of carcass/es (e.g. recently dead, skeletal remains, etc.)
- ◆ If safe to do so, take photos or a video of the wildlife and the surrounding environment.

3. Report

REPORT if you have found 5 or more sick or dead birds or other animals of the same species.

Reports are critical to promote early detection and ongoing understanding of H5 bird flu and can be made by calling:

- ◆ The 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.
- ◆ The department of primary industries or agriculture in the state/territory in which the event occurred.

Avian influenza (including H5 bird flu) is a [nationally notifiable disease](#). If you suspect or can confirm that an animal is showing signs of the disease, you must report it. Reporting cases will improve our ability to investigate, detect and manage the spread of disease if it is detected.

What is the Emergency Animal Disease hotline?

The Emergency Animal Disease Hotline, 1800 675 888, is a national toll-free telephone number that connects callers to the relevant state or territory animal health authority to **report suspected emergency animal diseases**.

More information can be found at [Animal Health Australia- Emergency Animal Disease Hotline](#)

What happens after I call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline?

When you call the hotline, details about the incident will be collected and assessed by a state or territory government official to determine the appropriate next actions. 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.

What to look out for

The first sign of H5 bird flu in Australian wildlife is likely to be a rapid increase in numbers of sick or dead wild birds. Mammals can also be infected with H5 bird flu.

Birds

It is thought that any bird species in Australia could become infected with H5 bird flu, but the species most likely to be affected first are seabirds, waterbirds, shorebirds or birds of prey (such as eagles or hawks).

The signs of H5 bird flu infection in wild birds can vary widely. Affected birds may show a variety of signs of illness, and affected numbers may range from a single bird to many birds.

Any wild bird that looks “sick” could potentially be a case of H5 bird flu, but common signs include inability to stand or fly, unusual posture, or difficulty breathing.

Mammals (for example seals and sea lions, foxes and other species)

Infection in wild mammals may result in unusual signs of sickness or death in individuals or groups. Scavenging and predatory species, and marine mammals such as seals and sea lions appear to be the most common wild mammal types affected.

The signs of H5 bird flu infection in wild mammals can vary widely. The most common signs of H5 bird flu in mammals are thought to be lack of coordination, seizures and clumsy movements but other signs might include shaking, difficulty breathing and drooling.

Protect yourself and others from potential infection

How to keep safe after encountering sick or dead wildlife

AVOID direct or indirect contact with sick or dead wildlife and their environments

H5 bird flu virus can survive in faeces and other body fluids from sick and dead infected animals. It may persist in water and on land for several months, depending on conditions.

When you have been in areas with sick or dead wildlife, follow these hygiene measures to keep yourself safe, and to prevent spread of disease to people, animals, or environments:

- ◆ Wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and warm water and then dry completely. Hands must be cleaned of all visible material.
- ◆ Hand sanitiser (60-80% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol) can be used as a temporary measure where soap and water are not available. Wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
- ◆ Do not touch your face or put any item near your mouth until you are away from wildlife and your hands have been thoroughly washed or sanitised.
- ◆ Effective cleaning of contaminated footwear, clothing, vehicles and equipment is required to prevent spread of the virus to people and other animals, and movement of the virus between locations.
 - Clean shoes with detergent and water to remove all visible material, then disinfect and let them dry completely. If you can't clean your shoes immediately, seal them in a plastic bag until they can be cleaned and disinfected.
 - Wash your clothes as soon as possible in a washing machine with laundry detergent on the hottest cycle appropriate for the material.
 - Wash your hands thoroughly after cleaning and disinfecting.
- ◆ If your vehicle has come close to sick or dead wildlife or has been in an environment with suspect or confirmed H5 bird flu, wash your vehicle (tyres, mud flaps and wheel arches) as soon as you can, as close as possible to the site of the sick or dead wildlife.

How to keep pets safe

H5 bird flu may also affect birds and mammals which are kept as pets (e.g. dogs and cats). You can help keep your pets safe from H5 bird flu by taking the following actions:

- ◆ Do not allow pets to approach, touch, or eat sick or dead wildlife.
- ◆ Avoid taking your pets to locations where there is, or has been, a suspect or confirmed case of H5 bird flu.
- ◆ If your pet is displaying signs of sickness after interacting with wildlife, isolate them away from children and other pets and call your vet. Be prepared to provide your vet with information about your pet's exposure to wildlife.
- ◆ Monitor kept birds and poultry for unusual signs of illness or death and prevent direct or indirect contact with wild birds.

More information can be found at: [Protecting domestic poultry and birds](#)

What if I feel unwell after being in contact with sick or 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 sick or 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 sick or 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](#)

Stay informed with reliable sources

BirdFlu.gov.au

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

