

23 June 2024

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER BULLETIN

Detection of avian influenza H7N8 in Greater Sydney, NSW

NSW Department of Primary Industries and CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) have confirmed a second detection of high pathogenic avian influenza, serotype H7N8 in a broiler farm in Greater Sydney. The detection of the virus was confirmed by PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on Saturday 22 June.

Proactive sampling was undertaken by NSW DPI and the affected farm during routine surveillance on the property. The farm is located within the existing restricted emergency zone, in proximity to the original case detected on 19 June, 2024.

On 22 June, the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) issued a revised Emergency Order under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. The Emergency Order outlines the movement and housing controls to help control the virus and prevent further spread. The emergency order has been established in consultation with the impacted property, adjacent landholders and industry stakeholders and will be in place for a period of six months.

There is no connection to the NSW H7N8 cases and the current Victorian H7N3 and H7N9 HPAI outbreaks.

In addition, the H7N8 strain detected in Greater Sydney is not the same as the globally circulating H5N1 strain that is causing mass poultry and wildlife mortalities overseas.

Eggs and chicken meat remain safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked as per standard food handling practices.

The H7N8 avian influenza virus is not a risk to the public as it rarely affects humans unless there is direct and close contact with sick birds.

Avian influenza: clinical signs to look out for

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of poultry and occurs worldwide. Chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, quail, pheasants, emus and ostriches are among the more than 400 species that are susceptible to avian influenza. Many species of wild birds, including waterfowl and seabirds can also carry the virus.

The virus is mostly spread by wild birds, particularly ducks, contaminating food or water supplies. For this reason, the disease remains a constant biosecurity threat. Avian influenza can also spread by the movement of eggs, birds, people, vehicles and equipment between farms, and by clothing, footwear, aerosols, water, feed, litter, biting insects and vermin.

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by an influenza virus. Signs and symptoms include:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths
 - Sudden decline in feed and/or water consumption
 - Unusually quiet birds
 - Unusually depressed birds
 - Decreased vocalisation
 - Any decline in egg production from normal to cessation
 - Sudden appearance of pale shell eggs or eggs without shells
 - Any birds with swollen heads/combs/wattles
 - Any birds with dark combs and wattles
 - Any birds with nervous signs e.g. head shaking, head and neck tremors, unsteady gait
 - Abnormal position of head and neck in a reasonable % of birds
 - Respiratory disease e.g. breathing difficulties, coughing, sneezing
 - Purplish patches on the legs and unfeathered skin
 - Watery diarrhoea
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How to report symptoms

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease in NSW.

If you notice symptoms consistent with avian influenza, you must report it to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 or the Local Land Services on 1300 795 299 (during business hours).

Further Information

[NSW DPI Avian influenza](#)

[NSW DPI Notifiable pests and diseases](#)

[NSW DPI Emergency Animal Diseases: A guide for veterinarians](#)

[CSIRO Emergency animal diseases: A field guide for veterinarians](#)

[Lab information for veterinarians and sample management](#)

[Ausvetplan- Avian influenza Version 5.2](#)

[Animal Health Australia- Avian influenza](#)

[Procedure: HPAI](#)

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