

24 May 2024

CHIEF VETERINARY OFFICER BULLETIN

Avian Influenza H7N3

Avian Influenza outbreak: Meredith, Victoria – NSW preparedness update

Summary

- There is an outbreak of avian influenza (H7N3) at a mixed free-range and cage bird egg farm near Meredith, in Victoria (north-west of Geelong). The farm was confirmed infected on 22 May 2024
- A second premises, located in the Terang region, and linked to the first property, has also been confirmed to have avian influenza yesterday afternoon, 23 May 2024.
- The premises have been placed under movement restrictions and containment measures have been implemented.
- The H7N3 virus is not a risk to the public as it rarely affects humans unless there is direct and close contact with sick birds.
- There are no food safety concerns associated with avian influenza. Poultry products (meat and eggs) that have been properly cooked are safe for human consumption as the cooking process destroys the avian influenza virus.
- 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)

Avian influenza: clinical signs to look out for

- 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
- Chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowl, quail, pheasants and ostriches are included in the more than 140 species that are susceptible to avian influenza. Many species of wild birds, including waterfowl and seabirds can also carry the virus. It is mostly spread by wild birds, particularly ducks, contaminating food or water supplies

Biosecurity

- 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.
- Good biosecurity is paramount for all poultry owners. Having good biosecurity practices in place to protect your birds from disease is essential.
- Restrict contact between your birds and wild birds wherever you can
- Keep your poultry sheds, yards and aviaries, and equipment, clean
- Always quarantine new birds before introducing them to the resident flock
- Limit any visitors to your birds, and check if essential visitors have recently visited other premises where poultry are kept
- Always practice good hygiene if you attend bird shows
- Always wash your hands before and after handling birds and eggs
- Change into clean footwear before entering poultry houses or hen facilities, to stop the potential transfer of disease from outside

Further Information

[Animal Health Australia- Avian influenza](#)

[NSW DPI Avian influenza](#)

[NSW DPI Notifiable pests and diseases](#)

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

[Ausvetplan- Avian influenza Version 5.2](#)

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