

Responding to Avian Influenza

Avian influenza (AI) outbreaks can affect all poultry producers. This factsheet explains what to expect and who is involved in the response.

Common signs of avian influenza

In severe cases, avian influenza can appear suddenly, and birds can die within 24 hours. In chickens and turkeys, common signs include:

- sudden death, often without warning
- increased flock mortality
- lethargy, reduced feed and water intake
- watery eyes, nasal discharge, coughing
- tremors, paralysis
- swollen head, blue combs and wattles
- a drop in egg production or misshapen/soft-shelled eggs.
- Ducks tend to show neurological signs (tremors, paralysis), with decreased activity and lethargy.

How would avian influenza be spread to my flock?

Avian influenza usually spreads through wild birds. The virus can get onto your property:

- **through contact with wild birds or their droppings** — for example, wild birds mixing with your flock or contaminating yards
- **through contaminated water, feed or equipment** — such as birds drinking from dams, puddles or shared water sources

- **on people, clothing, footwear or vehicles** — for example, after visiting another property, bird sale or show
- **by bringing in infected birds or materials** — like new birds, eggs, bedding, manure or reused cartons
- **over short distances through air in high-risk situations** — such as between nearby sheds or farms

The virus can survive in water, manure and dirt, especially in cool, wet conditions.



How do I protect my property?

The best way to protect your farm is to follow your biosecurity plan and review it when disease risk increases. Practical steps could also include:

- **Keep wild birds away** — use netting or housing, and keep feed and water protected. Avoid ponds, dams and puddles.
- **Keep things clean** — remove waste regularly. Wash floors, walls and aviary wire with detergent, then disinfect sheds, equipment and containers.
- **Limit access** — restrict visitors, keep records, and avoid sharing equipment unless it's cleaned and disinfected.
- **Practice good hygiene** — wash hands, clean footwear and change clothes before and after handling birds.
- **Quarantine birds** — isolate new or returning birds for at least 30 days.
- **Take care at shows** — avoid contact between birds and clean equipment before and after.



farmbiosecurity.com.au has free biosecurity manuals, tips and resources.

Chickens

farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/chickens

Ducks

farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/ducks

Eggs

farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/eggs

My animals are displaying signs. What do I do?

If you notice multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, you should not touch them or get too close. Record your location and report it to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888**.

Can avian influenza affect people?

Avian influenza can affect humans, but this is rare. People who have close contact with infected birds are at higher risk. If you are concerned about your health, seek medical advice.

Avian influenza is not a food safety risk for chicken meat and eggs if handled and cooked correctly.

What happens when an avian influenza outbreak is confirmed?

State and territory governments are responsible for managing outbreaks in their jurisdictions, with support from industry, federal government and other agencies.

Your local authority may implement measures to contain or eradicate the disease. This may include movement controls, disease tracing or surveillance activities. See the [Control Measures factsheet](#) for more details.

You can help authorities control avian influenza as quickly as possible by following their instructions. Failure to do so may result in legal penalties.

I'm not directly affected. Is there anything I need to do?

Stay informed and prepared. Follow the directions of your state or territory government department of agriculture or primary industries. They will provide regular response updates through media releases, social posts and on their website. These updates will advise if there are any actions you should be taking.

Your peak industry body — Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Egg Farmers Australia or the Australian Duck Meat Association — may also provide guidance.

What is my industry's role during the response?

Your industry works with government to help manage EAD incidents. Each peak industry body has trained representatives who work with response teams and speak on behalf of producers through:

- **National Management Group (NMG)** — the body that makes key policy and cost sharing decisions for a response.
- **Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD)** — a body of technical experts that provides response advice and recommendations to NMG.
- **Liaison — Livestock Industry (LLI) representatives** — trained industry representatives who work with response coordinators, link agencies and producers, and help share clear, accurate information.

To learn more about the LLI role, visit animalhealthaustralia.com.au/LLI.

Who pays for the response?

The affected state or territory government pays the initial response costs.

Ongoing costs may be shared between governments and industry if arrangements under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) are activated.

The EADRA is a legally binding deed between the Australian Government, all state and territory governments, and 14 livestock industry groups. It enables a pre-agreed, coordinated, cost-shared response to EAD outbreaks.

Individual farmers do not pay for disease control measures on their properties, although industry levies may contribute to them.

Should I talk to the media?

There are no restrictions preventing you from talking to the media. However, consistent messaging is important to avoid confusion and protect market access.

During a response, your LLI will help share accurate information between response agencies and industry.

More information



Response updates

Your state or territory department of agriculture website is the best place to start for current response information. Updates can also be found at:

birdflu.gov.au

agriculture.gov.au

National response arrangements

AUSVETPLAN Response strategy:
Avian influenza

animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan

Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA)

animalhealthaustralia.com.au/eadra

Industry bodies

Australian Chicken Meat Federation
chicken.org.au

Egg Farmers Australia
eggfarmersaustralia.org

Want to know more about EADs?

Enrol today in the free EAD Foundation online course. It will help producers understand Australia's preparedness and response arrangements.

animalhealthaustralia.com.au/online-training-courses.

