

# RESPONDING TO AVIAN INFLUENZA

Do you know what would happen during an avian influenza (AI) response? As a poultry or egg producer, it's important you know who does what in the event of an emergency animal disease (EAD) outbreak.

## **My animals are displaying unusual clinical signs. What do I do?**

Call your local private or government veterinarian. They will conduct investigations to confirm or rule out the presence of the virus.

Alternatively, you can also call the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888** if you've spotted something unusual. In severe forms, the disease appears suddenly and birds can die within 24 hours, sometimes without showing classical signs of the disease. In chickens and turkeys, clinical signs include a lack of energy and reduced feed and water consumption, severe respiratory signs with excessively watery eyes and sinusitis, neurological signs such as tremors and paralysis, cyanosis of the comb and wattles, swelling of the head, misshapen or soft shelled eggs and a drop in egg production.

Ducks tend to predominantly display neurological signs, with decreased activity and lethargy as a common finding.

## **What happens when an AI outbreak is confirmed?**

State/territory governments are responsible for managing outbreaks in their jurisdictions, with support from industry and other agencies. The chicken, egg and duck industries also have trained liaison representatives who can provide industry specific insights and skills during a response.

If your property is assessed to be at risk of being infected or contaminated with the AI virus, the state/territory government will implement control measures on your property. These may include movement controls, disease tracing or surveillance activities. Similar controls may also be placed across at-risk geographic areas which may then impact a range of properties.

You can help state/territory governments control AI as quickly as possible by complying with their directions. If you don't follow instructions, there may be legal ramifications, including fines or imprisonment. For more information about control measures that may be implemented, see our **Control Measures factsheet**.

## **I'm not directly affected by an outbreak. Is there anything I need to do?**

Follow the directions of your state/territory government department of agriculture or primary industries. They will provide information about the EAD outbreak, what activities are taking place in the response to the outbreak and whether there are any actions you should be taking.

Your peak industry body - Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Australian Eggs or the Australian Duck Meat Association - may also be able to provide guidance or information on the response. Your best line of defence against an EAD is to continue to follow the disease management protocols outlined in your farm biosecurity plan and implement any additional protocols needed to protect your farm and stock while the disease risk is heightened.

## What will my industry be doing during the response?

The affected industry (represented by the relevant peak industry body) will be involved through the:

- National Management Group (NMG), the key decision-making body during cost-shared responses to animal health emergencies in Australia
- Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD), the key technical body responsible for coordinating the national response to animal health emergencies in Australia
- Liaison — Livestock Industry (LLI) functional role, the nominated and authorised representative of the affected industry responsible for acting as the official conduit between the control centres and the peak industry bodies.

Industry personnel may be contracted by government to perform additional functional roles within the control centre, such as the Specialist Advice — Livestock Industry. Further information on the role of industry is available [here](https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au). ([animalhealthaustralia.com.au](https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au))

## Where do I go for information?

Depending on the scale of the outbreak, local, state or national government bodies will share information on their social media channels and websites. This is the best place to source information. Your state or territory department of agriculture or primary industries website will have specific information for your area and your private veterinarian may also be able to assist with any enquiries. The Commonwealth's outbreak website ([www.outbreak.gov.au](https://www.outbreak.gov.au)) may also provide relevant information.

## Who pays for the response?

The affected state or territory government will pay for the initial costs of the response to the outbreak. Ongoing costs may be cost-sharable under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, and eligible costs will be shared between governments and the affected industry/ies. Individual farmers do not pay for the cost of controlling the disease on their properties, but levies contributed by the industry may help to pay for the response.

## Should I talk to the media?

There are no restrictions in place to stop you from talking to the media. However, it's important that messaging about the outbreak is consistent to prevent the circulation of incorrect/confusing information, which could affect Australia's market access and individual trade relationships.

In an EAD response, your peak industry body will have a representative in charge of providing relevant industry information to the responders and sharing response information back to industry. Response agencies have communication mechanisms for sharing of information between government and producers. This may be through their websites, social media, call centers, community forums and other such mechanisms.



## How do I protect my property?

- Implement strong on-farm biosecurity practices. Visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) for further information.
- Restrict contact between your birds and wild birds. Contact with wild birds can be minimised by making the free-range environment less attractive to them, for example, place feeders and water sources inside sheds, rather than in the open where wild birds will have easier access. Using fencing or netting for free-ranging birds, are other options.
- Keep poultry sheds, yards and aviaries clean, including equipment. Clean thoroughly with a detergent before applying a disinfectant.
- Provide clean water. Keep your birds away from potentially contaminated water sources such as streams, dams, ponds and even puddles.
- Change nesting materials on a regular basis.
- Quarantine new birds before introducing them to the resident flock.
- Limit visitors to your birds. Check if essential visitors have recently visited other premises where poultry are kept.
- If you attend bird shows, don't allow your birds to mix directly with others.
- Always wash your hands before and after handling birds and eggs.
- Poultry farmers should change into clean footwear before entering poultry houses or enclosures, to stop the potential transfer of disease causing agents from outside.
- Importantly, report any sick or dead birds as a priority. This includes all domestic poultry or wild birds. To do this, contact your local veterinarian or call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

**EMERGENCY ANIMAL  
DISEASE HOTLINE  
1800 675 888**

## More information



**AUSVETPLAN Response strategy:  
Avian influenza**

[animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan](http://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan)

**Avian Influenza - Animal Health  
Australia**

[animalhealthaustralia.com.au/avian-influenza](http://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/avian-influenza)

**Emergency Animal Disease Response  
Agreement - Animal Health Australia**

[animalhealthaustralia.com.au/eadra](http://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/eadra)

**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries  
and Forestry**

[www.agriculture.gov.au](http://www.agriculture.gov.au)

**Australian Chicken Meat Federation**

[www.chicken.org.au](http://www.chicken.org.au)

**Australian Eggs**

[www.australianeggs.org.au](http://www.australianeggs.org.au)

You can also visit your relevant state or territory department of agriculture websites for further information.

## 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](http://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/online-training-courses)