



Veterinary Practice Board of Western Australia



H5 AVIAN INFLUENZA: CALM, PRACTICAL AND PREPARED

Recent detections of H5 bird flu in wild birds in Australia are a timely reminder of the important role veterinary teams play in animal health, public health and community confidence.

The message for veterinary practices is not to be alarmed, but to be prepared: follow current government advice, use appropriate biosecurity precautions, and ensure staff know what to do if a sick or dead bird, wildlife patient or other suspect animal is presented or reported.



Australian Government advice is that the current risk to human health remains low, and there is no evidence of infection in poultry or the wider agriculture industry. However, people should not touch sick or dead wild birds or other animals unless appropriately trained and equipped. This communication is based on official government advice, however, veterinary practices are encouraged to keep updated and check official resources regularly as advice may change.

If veterinary practices are contacted by members of the public who have seen multiple sick or dead birds or other animals, they should be advised to keep their distance, record the location, and report it to the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888**.

Veterinary teams are experienced in managing infectious disease risk. Avian influenza should be approached with the same disciplined mindset used for other zoonotic risks: triage first, minimise unnecessary handling, use appropriate PPE and hygiene measures, isolate risk where possible, and report concerns promptly.

Practices do not need to refuse to treat all wildlife or birds because of avian influenza concerns, but staff should not be expected to handle high-risk animals without proper systems in place. Clear protocols, current contact details and regular staff briefings will help clinics respond safely and consistently.

- Keep the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline number visible: 1800 675 888.
- Review triage procedures for sick or dead birds and wildlife.
- Keep children, pets, clients and unprotected staff away from suspect cases.
- Maintain suitable PPE, cleaning, disinfection and waste-handling procedures.
- Monitor updates from [DAFF](#), [WA DPIRD](#), [WA Health](#), [AVA](#) and [Wildlife Health Australia](#).

Avian influenza is a serious animal health threat, but the response should be measured, evidence-based and aligned with official advice. Veterinary teams can support animal welfare and community confidence by being prepared, using appropriate precautions and reporting concerns promptly.

The Animal Health Committee (AHC) has just released the [National H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza guidelines for veterinarians](#). The guidelines are "to support private veterinarians to prepare for the risk of H5 HPAI in the current situation, particularly should this virus become established in Australia at a later time". The AHC cover letter in full can be found [here](#).

For other useful official resources refer to:

[DAFF advice for veterinarians](#) – signs of bird flu, protecting yourself and your clinic and more

[DAFF Bird Flu](#) – general advice and update of current situation

[DPIRD webpage](#) – Western Australia

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