



Australian Government

BIRDFLU

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS



For more information on what to do if you suspect your birds have bird flu, simple measures you can take to help prevent your birds catching the virus or if you work in the poultry industry, go to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website www.daff.gov.au/birdflu.

If you are concerned about your own or your family's health you should seek advice from your doctor.

IS IT SAFE TO EAT POULTRY AND EGGS?

Yes. Currently Australian birds and poultry are free from H5N1 bird flu. If bird flu arrives in Australia, the World Health Organization advises that humans are not at risk of acquiring the infection through food if safely handled and properly cooked.

By following these safe food handling and cooking tips every day, you can help protect yourself from a range of food borne illnesses:

- Store meat and eggs in the refrigerator or meat in the freezer.
- Keep raw meat and juices separate from other foods.
- Wash your hands before and after handling raw poultry meat and eggs.

- Cook all poultry meat until it is cooked throughout so that the juices run clear and there is no pink meat.
- Wash utensils and surfaces, such as chopping boards, with hot soapy water immediately after use.

For more information about food safety, see: www.safefood.net.au

WHAT IF I'M TRAVELLING OVERSEAS?

To find out if the country you are travelling to is affected by bird flu visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's travel bulletin at www.smarttraveller.gov.au. Make sure your travel documents are up to date in case you need to leave at short notice.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For more information on the human health risks of bird flu or how to prepare for the possibility of an influenza pandemic, visit the Commonwealth Government Department of Health and Ageing home page at www.health.gov.au or call 1800 004 599.

www.health.gov.au

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Australia is currently free from H5N1 bird flu. While it may never come here, it is important that we are prepared for the possibility and ready to respond to the threat it presents. This brochure provides information on bird flu, what the Commonwealth Government is doing to prepare for a bird flu outbreak and advice on what you can do to protect yourself and your family.

WHAT IS BIRD FLU?

Bird flu (also known as avian influenza) is caused by an influenza virus that affects birds. To date bird flu has mostly affected water birds and domestic poultry. While there are many strains of bird flu the one currently causing worldwide concern is H5N1. Wild migratory birds have spread the H5N1 strain of bird flu over long distances and many overseas countries have been affected. The H5N1 strain of bird flu is deadly for domestic birds and poultry and it can spread quickly through flocks.

WHY IS BIRD FLU A CONCERN?

There are two main risks to human health from bird flu:

1. There is a risk of people catching bird flu through direct contact with sick or dead birds, or their droppings. Bird flu is not easily caught, but can cause severe illness in people.

2. There is a possibility that H5N1 bird flu could change into a new form of influenza that is able to spread among humans. If this happens there could be a widespread epidemic or (worldwide) pandemic.

WHAT IS THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT DOING?

The Commonwealth Government is closely monitoring the situation overseas in conjunction with international agencies and health experts and is assisting neighbouring countries to combat the threat of bird flu.

Surveillance has been increased at Australia's international air and sea ports and mail centres to detect and manage any infected birds or bird products. All bird products entering Australia from any country are subject to quarantine import conditions. The Commonwealth Government and states and territories with the help of bird watchers and wild life carers have increased the surveillance of wild birds for bird flu.

The Commonwealth Government and the states and territories have extensive plans in place and are ready to respond in the event bird flu changes into a human epidemic. This includes a national stockpile of medicines and equipment.

AM I AT RISK FROM BIRD FLU?

As there is no H5N1 bird flu in Australia at this time, the risk of Australians catching bird flu from birds is extremely low. Most human cases overseas have occurred where people live in close contact with domestic birds and their droppings and have been handling sick or dead birds.

Should an outbreak of bird flu occur, Australia has well tested plans to contain and eradicate the disease. However, following these steps will further reduce your risk:

- If you own birds such as chickens or have a bird aviary in your backyard, make sure their food and water source is kept clean and immediately report any unexpected bird deaths to the [Emergency Disease Watch Hotline](#) on 1800 675 888.
- Avoid situations where you unnecessarily come into close contact with wild birds and their droppings.
- Do not touch or pick up dead or sick birds of any species – teach your children this as well.
- As always, wash your hands regularly with soap and water especially after touching birds or animals, before preparing food and eating, and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.