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HPAI (Bird Flu) Update for Bird Owners

As many of you may be aware, Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N1, often called “bird flu”) has now been detected in Western Australia.

Although this update is most relevant to owners of companion birds and backyard poultry, we wanted to keep our wider client community informed about the situation and the measures we are taking to protect all of our patients, clients and staff.

While the overall risk to most companion birds remains low, this development serves as an important reminder that good biosecurity practices play a key role in reducing the risk of disease transmission.

At The Unusual Pet Vets, we are closely monitoring the situation and have implemented enhanced biosecurity measures to help keep our patients, clients and staff safe.

What can I do to protect my birds?

Companion birds

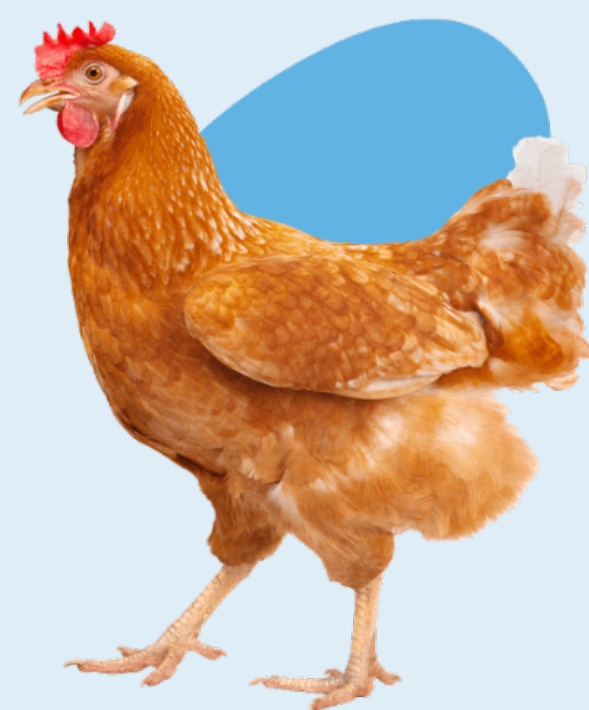


- Keep birds indoors wherever possible.
- Prevent direct contact with wild birds.
- Avoid allowing birds outside in areas frequented by waterfowl, seabirds or other wildlife.
- Wash hands before and after handling birds.
- Avoid sharing cages, carriers or equipment between households.
- Avoid feeding wild birds around your property.

What can I do to protect my birds?

Backyard Poultry

- Prevent all contact between poultry and wild birds - the easiest way to do this is to keep backyard poultry confined to their coop, preventing free-ranging.
- Cover feed and water sources so they cannot be contaminated by wild birds - this might mean putting a roof on your chicken coop and making it "bird proof" with netting or bird wire.
- Restrict access to ponds, dams and natural water sources used by wild birds.
- Have dedicated footwear for your poultry areas (change shoes before and after servicing your chickens).
- Wash hands after handling birds, eggs or equipment.
- Avoid introducing new birds to your flock.



What about my other pets?

Dogs and Cats

At this stage, the risk to most non-avian pets remains very low. However, overseas experience has shown that some mammals can become infected with HPAI following contact with infected birds or contaminated environments. If your pet has had contact with a sick or dead wild bird and subsequently develops signs of illness, please contact your veterinarian for advice.



To help minimise risk:

- Do not allow dogs, cats or other pets to investigate, handle or consume sick, injured or dead wild birds.
- Keep cats indoors where possible and supervise dogs when walking in areas frequented by waterfowl or seabirds.
- Avoid contact with bird droppings, feathers or carcasses.
- If you find a sick or dead wild bird, do not handle it yourself. Contact the Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Hotline (1800 675 888) (24/7 availability) and report it.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after any unavoidable contact with wildlife or bird-contaminated environments.

What signs should I watch for?

Contact your veterinarian if your bird develops:

- Sudden illness
- Difficulty breathing
- Nasal or eye discharge
- Vomiting, regurgitation or nausea
- Neurological signs (head tilt, tremors, seizures, incoordination)
- Severe lethargy
- Sudden death within a flock

If multiple birds become sick or die unexpectedly, this should be reported immediately via the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

What is UPV doing?

To reduce the risk of introducing HPAI into our hospitals, we have implemented enhanced biosecurity protocols, including:

- Pre-appointment avian screening questions
- Enhanced triage procedures
- Dedicated assessment pathways for higher-risk birds
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols
- Additional PPE requirements for some avian presentations
- Ongoing monitoring of government advice

We have also temporarily suspended admissions of avian wildlife and stray birds at our Western Australian clinics. While this is a difficult decision, it allows us to reduce the risk of disruption to veterinary services for owned companion birds, backyard poultry and exotic pets during this evolving situation.

We understand many owners may be concerned. We will continue to monitor developments closely and provide updates as the situation evolves.

Kind regards,

Dr Hamish Baron

Managing Director

The Unusual Pet Vets

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