

Bird flu advice for bird shows

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a viral disease that mainly affects birds. It can also affect other animals and, on rare occasions humans.

In June 2026, several migratory seabirds found on the southern coast of Australia tested positive for H5 bird flu (H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza).

This is the first time the globally circulating H5 bird flu strain has been detected in Australia.

Overseas, this strain has led to extensive deaths in poultry, wild birds and mammals, particularly marine mammals and mammals that prey or scavenge on birds.

Currently in Australia (as at 26 June 2026), there is no evidence of mass mortality in wildlife or spread to other animals, and no detection in poultry.

Risk from migratory birds

Bird flu can spillover and spread from wild birds to kept birds and animals particularly those that prey or scavenge on birds.

What should you do?

- **LOOK** for signs of bird flu in your birds.
- **REPORT** suspect cases to Biosecurity Queensland on the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 immediately.
- **PROTECT** your birds – at home and at events.

What to LOOK for?

H5 bird flu spreads between animals via droppings and respiratory secretions of birds,

and contaminated environments, equipment, eggs, feed, footwear and clothing. Bird flu can persist in the environment for extended periods under favourable environmental conditions.

Signs of infection in birds include:

- lack of coordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- twisted necks or other abnormal posture
- inability to stand or fly
- diarrhoea
- difficulty breathing, coughing or sneezing
- swelling of the head, neck and eyes
- cloudiness or change in colour of eyes
- sudden death.

How do I REPORT sick or dead animals?

If you suspect bird flu in any animal, you must report it to Biosecurity Queensland on the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 (available 24/7).

As a nationally notifiable animal disease, anyone who suspects an animal might be infected with bird flu has a legal responsibility to report it as soon as possible.

How do I PROTECT birds?

Any gathering of birds carries the risk of spreading disease, particularly where there is contact between birds from different flocks.

Exhibitors should:

- not take any birds to a show if there are signs of illness in their flock

- avoid handling birds other than their own, unless they thoroughly wash and, ideally, disinfect their hands between birds
- not share equipment between birds from different sources unless it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- clean and disinfect all equipment, cages and containers before and after a show
- ensure all birds returning home undergo a period of quarantine before re-introduction to the flock
- discard any leftover feed, used floor coverings (e.g. sawdust, straw) or other material at the end of the show in a way that avoids contact with other birds (kept or wild).

Bird show organisers should:

- [have a biosecurity plan in place](#)
- have a veterinarian in attendance or contactable
- ensure any bird that becomes sick at an event is isolated and is assessed by a veterinarian
- where possible, different species of birds should be kept separate. In particular, waterfowl should not be displayed near pigeons, poultry or other birds
- ensure judges thoroughly wash and, ideally, disinfect their hands between handling birds
- ensure show birds cannot come into contact with wild birds, and wild birds cannot access feed and water.

Human health

Human infections are rare. Overseas, people have been infected with H5 bird flu, typically after close contact with infected birds, animals or contaminated environments. If a person is displaying influenza-like symptoms after coming into contact with infected birds, they should seek advice from their doctor.

Standard infection control practices should always be implemented when handling birds, regardless of the perceived risk.

For more information

- [Avian influenza](#)
- [National Biosecurity Manual - Exhibition poultry](#)
- [Australian Centre for Disease Control - Bird flu toolkit for people who work with birds](#)