

VPFA Update August 2026

H5N1 Avian Influenza

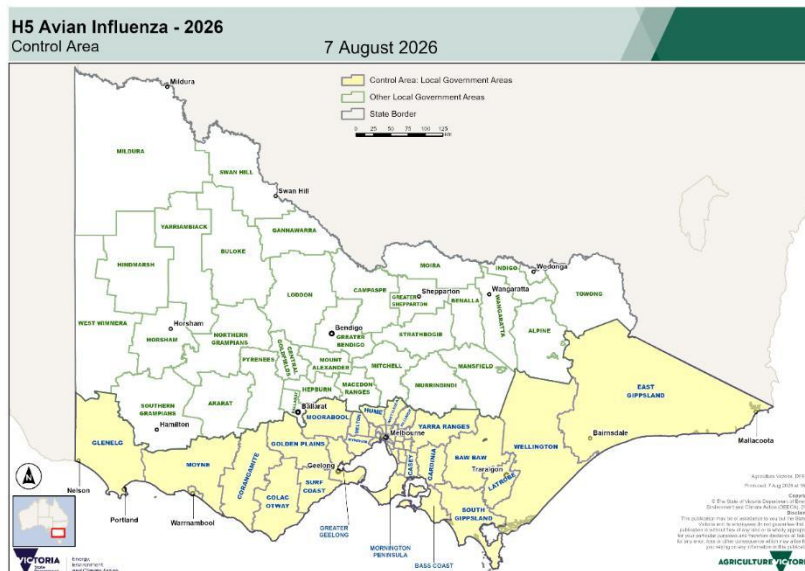
The arrival of H5N1 is an unwelcome occurrence for all of us. This strain of the bird flu is both highly infectious and highly parthenogenic, meaning that it leads to high levels of mortality when it enters poultry populations.

As I write this the first Little Penguin with H5N1 has been confirmed and there are detections of H5N1 in native bird populations in an increasing number of locations across Victoria (and around Australia). Most of the detections have been in SW Victoria to date and DNA sequence analysis by Agriculture Victoria has confirmed that the virus is the same as that identified in terns in South Australia.

The last week or so has been a busy one understanding and reacting to advice from Agriculture Victoria.

The VPFA will remain in contact with Agriculture Victoria and forward information as it arrives but the most up-to-date information regarding control orders and affected locations is on the AgVic website

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/poultrydiseases/H5N1-avian-influenza-H5-bird-flu>



Housing Orders

On Friday 7 August, Agriculture Victoria announced an initial 2-week housing order for poultry flocks of greater than 50 birds in a range of local government areas across southern Victoria. This means that all birds should be confined to housing to prevent interaction with wild birds or access to water sources that wild birds may frequent. If this is not possible the expectation is that flock owners take all practical steps to limit the interaction with wild birds though measures such as excluding wild birds

Signs of Bird Flu

The first sign of bird flu may be the sudden death of some poultry. Other signs include:

- Rapid drop in feed intake
- Sudden drop in egg production
- Typical 'sick bird' signs – ruffled feathers, depression, closed eyes
- Diarrhoea
- Birds having trouble breathing, coughing or sneezing
- Lethargy or not eating/drinking

- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- Discharge from the eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Twisted necks or unusual posture

H5 bird flu should be considered if a high proportion of a flock or group of birds becomes ill very quickly – progressing from normal to severe illness or death within 24 to 48 hours.

If you see any of these signs in your flock, call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Biosecurity

Biosecurity at your flock and yards remains the most effective means for preventing the incursion of H5N1 into your flock. Although the most likely source of infection is wild birds, other potential sources include poultry brought on to your property, virus spread on boots or machinery from a source of infection.

Regardless of whether a housing order applies to your flock now is the time to implement strict biosecurity protocols. The following suggestions are from Agriculture Victoria

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/poultrydiseases/H5N1-avian-influenza-H5-bird-flu/avian-influenza-informationfor-backyard-poultry-owners>

Poultry and bird owners should take practical steps now to reduce the chance of their birds making contact with wild birds, wild bird droppings or contaminated water.

These may include the following:

- Keep feed and water in areas that wild birds cannot access.

- Prevent poultry and other kept birds from accessing dams, ponds or other water sources used by wild birds.
- Use netting, fencing, roofing or other barriers where practical to reduce contact with wild birds or wild bird droppings.
- Keep poultry areas and aviaries clean and remove spilled feed, fallen fruit or standing water that may attract wild birds.
- Wear clean footwear and clothing when entering poultry areas.
- Clean and disinfect footwear and equipment before entering poultry areas if you have been in areas used by wild birds.
- Wash your hands before and after handling birds.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with other people's poultry while the situation is being monitored.
- Monitor birds closely and report any signs of illness or unexplained deaths.

Poultry should not share water from sources that wild birds frequent, as they can become contaminated and a source of infection.

The following water sources are less likely to be contaminated:

- Treated (chlorinated) mains water
- Bore water that has been tested and is suitable quality for poultry (poultry have a low tolerance for saline water)

The VPFA is currently organising speakers for a webinar on biosecurity and avian influenza with more information to come shortly.

Provisional Judges

The VPFA judge assessments planned in conjunction with the VWA on Sunday 13th September have been postponed due to the H5N1 outbreak. We will advise of a rescheduled date as soon as possible.

Congratulations Liam Collins

Liam was a member of the Victorian team that were winners of the Keast Shield for the aggregate award at the Young Judges National Finals held at Ekka recently. Congratulations on behalf of all VPFA members Liam.



Promoting Poultry at Ag Shows

The VPFA Board has reached out to Victorian Agricultural Shows through Director Ben Pickles and we have developed a set of awards to recognise showing at Ag Shows including an aggregate award. This was to be launched this year, but with the uncertainty of H5N1, it has been decided to postpone this for 26/27.

AGM Location Change, Nominations etc

Nomination forms for the VPFA board will be sent to all members shortly. Please consider nominating for the Board and joining us to work to promote poultry

across Victoria. The AGM will now be held in Bendigo – not Seymour as previously advised.

Feedback

We welcome any feedback on this VPFA update and what you would like to see covered.

Kevin