DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING

National Avian Influenza Summit

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Vaccination of poultry and other birds

- Decisions about whether to vaccinate domestic poultry against HPAI involves multiple factors and could lead to varying opinions among stakeholders.
- The default policy for an outbreak of HPAI in poultry is to contain and eradicate the disease in the shortest possible time, without the use of vaccination.
- Vaccination has not been used in past Australian outbreaks involving poultry but is used in some countries overseas.
- In the event of an HPAI outbreak, the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases may consider the use of vaccination.
- There is currently no appetite for vaccination of commercial poultry among QUADs alliance countries due to uncertainties around trade impacts, and subsequent World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) surveillance requirements.
- The department is exploring policy considerations and feasibility for the vaccination of wildlife. Trials are occurring in NZ and the US for the vaccination of threatened species.
- Animal Health Australia have been commissioned to identify potential vaccines for commercial poultry as a part of a broader project to support HPAI preparedness.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Avian influenza preparedness for wildlife populations – Meeting Brief

Meeting between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)

You will co-chair the meeting with Dean Knudson, Deputy Secretary, DCCEEW, who is responsible for leading reforms to transform Australia's national environmental laws and enhance biodiversity conservation.

1300-1400 AEST 26 June 2024

Item 1: Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

- As co-chair, you should welcome participants from DAFF and DCCEEW and provide an Acknowledgement of Country.
- The purpose of this meeting is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) in leading national preparedness and response arrangements for H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) particularly focussed on risk management in wildlife populations.

Item 2: Outcomes from the National Coordination Mechanism meetings on HPAI preparedness

- Attendees were provided a background paper on outcomes from recent National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) meetings (**Agenda paper 2**).
- On 18 April 2024 and 1 May 2024, DAFF and the National Emergency Management Agency co-chaired NCM meetings where Australian Government and state and territory government agencies, as well as Animal Health Australia and Wildlife Health Australia (WHA), discussed national HPAI preparedness initiatives.
- Several relevant action items were identified at these meetings, as listed in the paper.
- All of the relevant action items identified at the first NCM meeting have been completed.
- Relevant action items from NCM 2 include:
    - ensuring effective public communications before and during a response as an immediate priority.
    - reviewing the handover and transition points between health and biosecurity agencies for incidents involving animal and human cases.
    - clarifying the responsibilities for wildlife preparedness and response arrangements between agriculture, health and environmental agencies.
    - ensuring that jurisdictional agriculture and environmental agencies have an appropriate connection to state or territory level emergency response arrangements.
    - considering additional funding for wildlife surveillance and emergency response.
    - considering mass mortality and mass destruction plans.
    - considering how to exercise preparedness capabilities.
- All of the relevant action items are underway.
- DAFF has committed $580,000 (GST Inclusive) in 2023-24 to support further wildlife preparedness and surveillance initiatives with WHA, that will partially address several of the actions above. These include:
    - expanding risk-based targeted surveillance for HPAI in wildlife.
    - uplifting national collation and analysis capabilities for wildlife surveillance.

  - developing and updating nationally agreed guidance to support triage of wildlife mortality and outbreak investigations.
  - piloting a wildlife mortality reporting platform for the general public.
  - supporting development, revision and implementation of contingency plans and training resources to better enable response to HPAI in wildlife.
- These initiatives are in addition to DAFF's funding of WHA's One Health Surveillance Initiative under the 'Enhancing Australia's One Health surveillance and zoonotic disease prevention capabilities' program, which is due to expire in December 2025. Further information about the program is provided at **Attachment A**.
- Further national consideration will be required to consider ongoing needs and funding for wildlife surveillance and emergency response initiatives, including through WHA.

Item 3: Situation update

- Attendees were provided a background paper, covering the H7 HPAI situation in Victoria and global H5 HPAI H5 situation. Data was current as of 17 June 2024 (**Agenda paper 3**).
- You can invite Dr Beth Cookson to provide a brief update on the H7 outbreak in Victoria and New South Wales and the global H5 HPAI situation.

Item 4: Current preparedness for H5 HPAI in wildlife

- You can invite Beth Cookson to provide an update on current preparedness initiatives for H5 HPAI in wildlife on behalf of DAFF.
- You can invite DCCEEW to provide an update on current preparedness initiatives for H5 HPAI in wildlife on behalf of the agency. This is expected to cover initiatives led by Parks Australia, Australian Antarctic Division and Biodiversity Division.

Item 5: Clarifying roles and responsibilities for H5 HPAI in wildlife

- In this discussion, we are seeking a shared understanding with DCCEEW on roles and responsibilities to prepare for and respond to outbreaks of H5 HPAI in wildlife.
  - We propose that an officer-level working group be established to identify gaps and clarify respective roles and responsibilities with membership from DAFF, DCCEEW and the Department of Health and Aged Care.
- Currently DAFF is undertaking a range of preparedness activities for H5 HPAI in wildlife including:
  - revisiting Australia's national vaccination policy for poultry and captive wild birds and investigating available vaccines.
  - coordinating with state and territory governments, poultry industries and wildlife stakeholders such as WHA to ensure surveillance efforts will optimise the chance of early detection of an incursion of HPAI.
  - supporting a joint working group between the Animal Health and the Environment and Invasives Sectoral Committees to clarify wildlife and poultry response mechanisms. DCCEEW participates as an observer.
  - raising awareness of HPAI, including through social media and outbreak.gov.au.
- In an emergency response for H5 HPAI in wildlife, our role is to:
  - chair and provide secretariat services to relevant Consultative Committees and the National Management Group, provided responses are managed under cost-sharing deeds and are eradicable.
    - It is expected that responses to H5 HPAI in wildlife may involve an off-deed response, which can be coordinated through a similar consultative committee structure. We note that DCCEEW may be an invited observer to these meetings, which would be the case for an H5 HPAI outbreak.

  - assist in national coordination of large-scale outbreak responses.
  - lead public communication about national response arrangements and biosecurity risks.
  - support Australian government activities as required in outbreaks on Commonwealth lands or external territories.
  - coordinate national communications through the National Biosecurity Communications and Engagement Network.
  - undertake international reporting to the World Organisation for Animal Health.
  - manage interruptions to international market access for Australian animals and animal products.
- Our understanding of DCCEEW's potential role in preparedness is to:
  - understand and mitigate potential risks to matters of national environmental significance[1].
  - undertake site- and/or species-specific planning for response.
  - ensure Traditional Owners are informed and can participate in decision-making for response on jointly managed Parks.
  - consider a policy position on vaccination of high priority threatened species.
  - communicate and raise awareness of risks to environmental assets through threatened species managers networks, species recovery teams, bird banders, land managers and others.
- Our view of DCCEEW's potential role in a response (as indicated in the AUSBIOAGPLAN) is to:
  - participate in developing strategies and procedures for the control of pests and diseases that may affect wildlife or the environment.
  - where relevant, provide technical advice to inform the development of response policy (for example, plans for the control/destruction of wildlife or disposal of carcasses).
  - identify, evaluate and report any impacts on the environment, particularly those relating to parks and reserves under control of DCCEEW (for example, national parks).
  - respond as managers of Commonwealth places, for the places the DCCEEW administers (for example, national parks and botanic gardens, marine parks), in consultation with state and territory primary industry agencies.
- DCCEEW may also fulfill other roles including international reporting requirements associated with relevant treaties/agreements, and undertaking communication related to protection of environmental assets.
- Senior executive from both agencies have met on 14 and 20 June 2024 to discuss respective roles and responsibilities.
  - A proposed solution is to seek agreement at this meeting that:
    - that DCCEEW would participate in Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD) meetings when invited as an observer. To support this, DCCEEW could nominate staff for CCEAD training through Animal Health Australia.
    - that DCCEEW would participate in any joint information briefings for stakeholders during an outbreak with the Chief Veterinary Officer, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer. This approach was successfully used in the United Kingdom in response to the H5 HPAI outbreaks.

[1] Matters of national environmental significance include: World Heritage areas, Commonwealth Heritage places, wetlands of international importance (listed under the Ramsar Convention), listed threatened species and listed ecological communities, listed migratory species (protected under international agreements), Commonwealth marine areas, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, nuclear actions (including uranium mines), and water resources (relating to coal seam gas development and large coal mining development).

- that DCCEEW would continue to contribute to preparedness initiatives such as advising on threatened species and management of outbreaks affecting wildlife (including contingency planning and vaccination).

Item 6: Stakeholder communication

- Previous NCM meetings have engaged mainly government stakeholders. There is also a series of workshops that have been held between governments and the poultry industries on HPAI preparedness.
- Environmental stakeholders have not been engaged to the same extent, but there is a demand for information. The Invasive Species Council has been particularly vocal in seeking information about preparedness actions.
- There are plans to hold another NCM meeting to engage these stakeholders, but this has not been scheduled yet.
- Meeting participants should discuss potential formats for an environment stakeholder information session, which could take the form of a NCM meeting or a forum or briefing for interested stakeholders.

ATTACHMENT B – Trade implications of HPAI

Impact of an HPAI detection in wild birds on trade

- The WOAH Terrestrial Code only recommends trade restrictions based on HPAI detection in poultry. Surveillance in wild birds is recommended for awareness and potential early detection, but a detection of HPAI in wild birds, while notifiable to WOAH, does not affect the HPAI status of a country or zone.
- Australia aligns our import settings with the WOAH Terrestrial Code, and we do not place trade restrictions on the import of poultry commodities following a detection of HPAI in wild birds in trading partners territory.
- While the impacts on exports following a H7 HPAI detection in poultry is well understood, the reactions of trading partners to a wild bird H5 HPAI detection in Australia cannot be fully anticipated and some impact on exports may result. The department is conducting further trade preparedness work to understand these impacts.

s. 33(a)(iii)

Impact of HPAI vaccination in wild birds on trade

- Under the WOAH Terrestrial Code, vaccination of poultry or wild birds does not affect the HPAI status of a free country if an appropriate surveillance system is in place that supports the absence of HPAI infection in poultry.
- Australia does not intend to restrict imports of eligible poultry commodities in the event of wild bird vaccinations and many other countries if the practice becomes more widespread.
- There is very limited experience in the use of vaccination for HPAI in wild birds, with vaccination used experimentally in key localised and critically endangered wild bird populations such as Californian Condors.
- The department is unaware of any trade disruptions as result of vaccination in wild birds, however further trade preparedness work is required to understand potential impacts.

Impact of HPAI vaccination in poultry on trade

- Australia aligns our import settings with the WOAH Terrestrial Code, and we do not place trade restrictions on the import of poultry commodities following vaccination of poultry in trading partners provided they are accompanied by surveillance measures as set out in the WOAH Code.
- Trading partners have variable reactions to the use of vaccination against HPAI in poultry. s. 33(a)(iii)

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- The use of vaccines in poultry for HPAI will impact export trade for poultry and poultry products as some importing requirements s. 33(a)(iii) state vaccination for HPAI is not practised in Australia to control the disease.
    - Further analysis is required for the full extent of the impact of vaccination in poultry.
- The use of vaccination in both poultry and wild birds remains a global topic of conversation through WOAH and other forums.

Zoning and compartmentalisation for disease control and safe trade

- Zoning involves geographically defining infection-free sub-populations of animals and implementing controls for the purposes of disease control and to facilitate safe trade in affected goods (domestic and international).

s. 33(a)(iii)

- Whilst this approach is used for poultry populations in response to HPAI outbreaks, it would be largely unsuitable in response to HPAI infection in free-roaming wild bird populations.
- Compartmentalisation is a similar concept, in which infection-free sub populations of animals are defined based on biosecurity controls at specified establishments (rather than broad geographic areas) to facilitate safe trade.
- Compartmentalisation has been used effectively by some trading partners s. 33(a)(iii) to prevent spillover of HPAI from wild birds to poultry establishments within an established compartment scheme.
- Compartmentalisation is best suited to largely indoor farming systems (e.g. specific-pathogen free eggs), where biosecurity controls can be strictly enforced.
- Australia does not have established poultry compartments with official government oversight and many sectors/farms would need to invest heavily in biosecurity controls to meet acceptable standards.

Import statistics

- In the absence of major disruptions to domestic production, Australia is self-sufficient in household staples such as poultry meat and table eggs. Imports of these products are heavily restricted for biosecurity reasons.
- Australia relies on imports of some poultry products for further processing to meet industry demand such as egg powder for cakes for human consumption, and hatching (fertile) eggs for improvement of poultry flock genetics (feed conversion, carcass weight, etc).
- Australia is a net poultry meat exporter, albeit the export volumes are minor compared to other meat products such as beef.
- In the 2023-24 financial year, Australia imported 50,800 tonnes of poultry meat at a value of $132 million.
- In the 2023-24 financial year, Australia imported 2600 tonnes of non-fertilised eggs and egg products at a value of $26.2 million.
- In the 2023-24 financial year, Australia imported 200 tonnes of fertile eggs at a value of $1.3 million.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Further background

Summary of Invasive Species Council (ISC) recommendations and activities underway or being further considered

1. DAFF shares ISC's concerns about the potential impacts on Australia's unique wildlife and ecosystems should the HPAI virus circulating abroad arrive in Australia.
    a. HPAI outbreaks have resulted in substantial and usual impacts on wildlife overseas, including threatened and vulnerable wild bird populations.
2. DAFF has been closely monitoring the global situation, particularly the surge in cases and wildlife mortalities, and considering this in the context of Australia's preparedness.
3. In light of the potentially increased threat, a number of activities were initiated by DAFF last year – many of which align to ISC's recommendations. This includes:
    a. An expert assessment of the current level of risk (likelihood and consequence) was commissioned last year to better understand the risks in the unique Australian context, with findings due shortly, and will be considered in combination with work undertaken by the Human Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning group [*ISC recommendation 1*].
    a. There is ongoing engagement in international discussions about the use of HPAI vaccination and experiences overseas, including participation at the upcoming World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) General Session focused on HPAI vaccination [*ISC recommendation 2*]
    b. A number of national and other networks are actively focused on monitoring and assessing HPAI risks and preparedness, including the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Steering Committee and the Human Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning group [*ISC recommendation 3, in part*]
    c. There is strong collaboration with WOAH and affected countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, to learn from experiences overseas. There is internationally recognised HPAI expertise within Australia and Australian participation in international discussions, including participation in the WOAH/FAO network of expertise on avian influenza (OFFLU), as well as Australian participation in a recent FAO global consultation on HPAI, and the renewed East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Avian Disease Working Group [*ISC recommendation 5*]
    d. An assessment of the adequacy of general wild bird surveillance activities in Australia has been undertaken through WHA, with findings to be considered shortly.[1] Enhanced general wild bird surveillance and biosecurity is recommended during periods identified as higher risk (e.g. during Austral spring migration). Targeted wild bird surveillance continues at targeted locations, and

[1] Draft has been received by DAFF and is currently being reviewed.

findings from the risk assessment underway may be used to inform any further review and/or other actions [*recommendation 8*]

s. 33(a)(iii)

f. The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy engages with First Nations communities across Northern Australia, including through Indigenous rangers, to monitor and report on morbidity and mortality events, and draw on their extensive and invaluable knowledge of Australia's ecosystems. Avian influenza surveillance activities by NAQS officers have been increased, and stakeholder engagement tools developed to increase awareness and reporting *[ISC recommendation 9*].

4. DAFF is also working with partners to consider further risk-based activities that may be necessary once we have the results of activities. This includes:
   a. further consideration of the use of vaccination in Australia based on experiences overseas [*ISC recommendation 2*]
   b. the development of documented principles and guidelines for HPAI prevention, preparedness and response in Australian wildlife through WHA [*ISC recommendation 4, 6, 7, 9*]
   c. working with partners to identify wild bird species/populations at highest risk of severe impact, complementing disease risk assessments [*ISC recommendation 1*]
5. HPAI preparedness relies on collaboration across countries, sectors, organisations and individuals, and the adoption of a One Health approach – recognising the implications across animal, environmental and human health.
   a. DAFF draws on strong international networks to monitor and learn from the situation abroad, including providing technical advice to affected countries, such as the United Kingdom, to help inform Australia's preparedness.
   b. DAFF will be participating in the upcoming WOAH General Session Animal Health forum on HPAI.
   c. Our discussions with overseas counterparts have also highlighted the importance of expertise, input and collaboration from environmental and conservation partners.
   d. We also continue to engage with human health counterparts.
6. ISC's engagement on HPAI is valued.
   a. The model used to facilitate collaboration within the environmental sector, and across the sectors, is being further considered. The model should complement the valuable networks already in place.
   b. DAFF and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) will continue to work closely together, and look forward to further collaboration with ISC.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Further background

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
ISC 1: The Australian Government commission an expert assessment of the risks of HPAI for Australian wild birds and mammals, including threatened species.	The Australian Government last year commissioned expert HPAI risk assessments: - The risks (likelihood and consequence) of HPAI entry to Australia via migratory birds, commissioned through Wildlife Health Australia, with an estimated completion date of mid-2023.* - The Human-Animal Spill over and Emerging Diseases Scanning (HASEDS) group has also undertaken a rapid assessment of the impacts to Australia should H5 H5N1 establish in Australia – with assessed high risk to wildlife (and livestock). The findings from these activities will be used to inform further risk-based action. **Note: Funding provided by DAFF for the suite of priority activities recommended by the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) Steering Committee, including this risk assessment, was $180 000.*	An assessment of wild bird species/ populations (including threatened species) at heightened risk of severe impact in Australia should an incursion occur from an ecological perspective is being considered to complement disease risk assessments. This could assist in informing wildlife surveillance and preparedness/response activities. CEBO liaising with DCCEW/Threatened Species Commissioner on this.
ISC 2: As part of the risk assessment for wildlife, review the potential benefits and risks for wild birds of the vaccination of poultry against AI. **Do not permit vaccination if it will increase the disease risks for wildlife.**	Australia continues to monitor/engage in international discussions about HPAI including the use of vaccination. Australia will be participating in the upcoming World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), which will focus on HPAI, in particular vaccination. Australia's current (default) response strategy for HPAI is to pursue eradication in the shortest time possible, without vaccination. However, vaccination may be considered if an HPAI (or H5/H7 LPAI) outbreak is likely to spread or has become widespread. It would also be considered to protect rare, endangered, and valuable birds. Any use of vaccination would have to be agreed to at CCEAD.	Vaccination strategies will continue to be discussed, taking into account international developments and experiences, and including consideration of benefits and risks to wildlife within an integrated One Health framework.

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
	DAFF continues to advocate for One Health approaches when assessing biosecurity risks and potential risk management practices. This includes consideration of wildlife and environmental risks and impacts.	
ISC 3: To coordinate a national response to the risks of HPAI, the Australian Government urgently establish a national taskforce, with membership including environmental and biosecurity agencies from all governments, Wildlife Health Australia, other wildlife and disease experts (including veterinarians), zoo organisations involved in captive breeding and environmental NGOs.	The Australian Government recognises the importance of collaborative approaches and input from across different sectors, organisations and individuals. HPAI risks and national emergency animal disease arrangements are considered on an ongoing basis by DAFF and key partners, including WHA, AHA, jurisdictional governments, and other agencies. The WHA-led National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance (NAIWB*) Steering Committee continues to consider and discuss HPAI risks. This Committee comprises Australian national and jurisdictional government animal health and environment agencies (DEECCW, no state/territory), non-government organisations (e.g. Birdlife Australia, zoo representative) associated laboratories, universities and industry, and is a key network for wild birds. HPAI activities underway through WHA will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and experts, and will be shared with WHA wildlife health coordination network, including zoo organisations, environmental and biosecurity agencies, and surveillance partners. **Note: The NAIWB surveillance program operates on approximately $65 000 annually.*	The need to engage further with, and draw on expertise in the environmental and conservation sector has been identified, and options are being explored to most efficiently and effectively support this, while complementing existing networks and activities. Potential options include engagement through the existing structures under the Invasives and Environment Committee of the National Biosecurity Committee. DAFF and DCCEEW will continue to work closely together.
ISC 4: The national wildlife taskforce prepare and oversee the implementation of a national wildlife response plan for AI.	Wild birds are referenced in part within the AUSVETPLAN suite of documents*. DAFF and WHA provide input as part of the AUSVETPLAN process, and will continue to advocate for input from wildlife experts and integrated approaches across wildlife and domestic animals, with linkages to environmental and human health sector plans. Echoing ISC's recommendation, HASEDS has recently identified that the revision and/or development of preparedness and response plans for the detection of H5 HPAI in wild birds in Australia will support rapid,	Options for the development of a documented principles and guidelines for HPAI prevention, preparedness and response in Australian wildlife, with consideration of the evolving global situation, through WHA, are currently under consideration*. It is envisaged that this will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders and experts, with reference to current disease strategies in Australia,

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
	appropriate actions to be undertaken if needed. This reflects the exceptional situation and impacts on wildlife overseas. **Note: Animal Health Australia has advised that the AUSVETPLAN manual for avian influenza underwent a major review in 2021. Updates were made between November 2022 and April 2023 with a focus on updating the manual in accordance with the 2021 WOAH changes to the* Terrestrial Animal Health Code *and to reflect learnings from the 2020 avian influenza outbreak in Victoria, Australia. The process for these updates to be endorsed by government and industry parties has commenced through Animal Health Australia - the revised version could be available by the end of July 2023 (at the earliest). Animal Health Australia is aware that updated information on vaccination for HPAI will be discussed at the upcoming World Organisation for Animal Health General Session, and will be guided by Animal Health Committee and DAFF on the need for review of AUSVETPLAN.* *The AUSVETPLAN wild animal response strategy is also currently under review.*	emergency response mechanisms, and lessons learnt (and existing documents) from outbreaks overseas. The document may include decision trees, key procedures, reporting frameworks, and templates for local response plans for HPAI outbreaks in wildlife (as exemplified by the Phillip Island plan highlighted by ISC). We value ISC's having raised this recommendation. **Note: consideration is being given to using the One Health Investigation Fund to financially support this work.* ~~*The One Health Investigation Fund has financing of $8.4 million over four years (with $2 million allocated for the current financial year).*~~
ISC 5: The national taskforce review measures applied in and experiences with AI outbreaks in overseas bird colonies to learn what was effective, what to avoid and how to optimise recovery afterwards.	Australia has strong engagement with WOAH and affected countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. These networks continue to be harnessed to monitor and learn from overseas HPAI experiences abroad. This includes providing technical advice to affected countries, such as the UK. Networks continue to be nurtured and expanded to support the sharing of intelligence and Australia's preparedness. There is internationally recognised HPAI expertise within Australia and Australian participation in international discussions, including participation in the WOAH/FAO network of expertise on avian influenza (OFFLU), as well as Australian participation in a recent FAO global consultation on HPAI, and the renewed East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Avian Disease Working Group	Given the dynamic global situation, processes to incorporate lessons learned from affected countries should continue to be explored and adopted, across the range of HPAI preparedness activities.

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
ISC 6: In developing a national response plan for wildlife, the national taskforce consider: **(a) monitoring, reporting and research** **(b) regulating human access and activities** **(c) removing and disposing of dead birds** **(d) rescuing and euthanasing wildlife** **(e) response planning for local colonies** **(f) keeping humans safe and building public awareness** **(g) vaccinating captive-bred colonies of threatened species.**	The HASEDS rapid risk review identified importance of ongoing measures at critical control points of spill-over between wildlife, humans and poultry.	All items listed under ISC recommendation 6 would be important components of recommendation 4 (above), and complement AUSVETPLAN, and will be further considered as part of that suite of activities.
ISC 7: Australian governments encourage and provide resources for managers of sites with high concentrations of shorebirds, waterbirds or seabirds to prepare local response plans for AI outbreaks in wild birds, guided by advice from the national wildlife taskforce.	Pre-HPAI outbreak guidance is currently available on the WHA website (see ISC 9, below): https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/DiseaseIncidents/OngoingIncidents.aspx#HPAI_Info	Guidance and templates for local response plans to be developed as part of the suite of guidelines and supporting documents (recommendation ISC 4, above). Stakeholder communication and engagement activities continue to be considered, with a focus on coordination between relevant organisations.
ISC 8: The national wildlife taskforce review the 2023 AI surveillance program and provide advice about supplementary surveillance priorities for wild bird populations, including seabirds.	Given the increased activity of HPAI and multiple intercontinental movements of the virus in the last 2 years, a review of the performance of Australia's wild bird general surveillance program for avian influenza virus was commissioned last year, with consideration of Australia's capacity to respond rapidly should an incursion occur in light of the current global HPAI situation. Findings will be considered and used to	Findings from activities underway will be used to inform any enhancements to surveillance activities/approaches, and will be carefully considered to ensure they are implementable.

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
This could be supplemented by surveillance, in cooperation with international partners, along inward migration pathways and in the Southern Ocean.	inform further activities, with a focus on the lead up to the next wild bird migratory season (and associated likely heightened HPAI risk). Cooperation and intelligence sharing is already in place with countries to the north of Australia via various mechanisms (ACDP, DAFF, NAQS, WHA), and further afield globally. s. 33(a)(iii) Wildlife Conservation Plan for Seabirds recognises disease as a threat, the need for improved understanding of the impact of diseases on seabird populations and the requirement for best proactive biosecurity measures to be in place. https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/publications/wildlife-conservation-plan-seabirds-2022 **Note: Current wild bird surveillance involves targeted surveillance (sampling of apparently healthy wild birds known to carry Australian strains of avian influenza to monitor for international strains) and general surveillance (investigation of significant unexplained morbidity and mortality events in **any species** of wild birds). If HPAI was detected during enhanced or routine targeted or general surveillance, a larger and centrally coordinated response by Australia would be triggered. An immediate notification would also be made to WOAH in accordance with international reporting obligations.*	Activities under consideration through WHA include: - Exploring means of supporting surveillance partners to enhance targeted surveillance - Exploring means for improving sample submission from key migratory arrival points, to enhance AI exclusion activities for wild birds (e.g. online training re sampling and submission; broader dissemination of guidelines; engagement of existing regional networks e.g. indigenous rangers). - Reviewing capacity and funding options for exploring enhanced surveillance (especially evaluating feasibility and effectiveness of broadening species targets for surveillance in summer 2023/24), with reference to risk assessment and surveillance reports.
ISC 9: The national wildlife taskforce develop a program to encourage surveillance by indigenous rangers, birdwatchers, land managers and researchers, particularly in remote locations.	The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) program plays an important role in addressing unique biosecurity risks and conducting surveillance for exotic diseases through a range of targeted and general surveillance activities, as well as maintaining relationships with key stakeholders. For example, NAQS engages with First Nations communities across northern Australia, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ranger groups, who have extensive and invaluable	See above

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT ACTIVITIES	FURTHER ACTIVITIES UNDER CONSIDERATION
	knowledge of Australia's ecosystems, to monitor and report on any morbidity and mortality events. Avian influenza surveillance activities by NAQS officers have been increased and stakeholder engagement tools relating to avian influenza have been developed to encourage awareness and reporting. WHA resources and advice related to HPAI that could be utilised include: ▪ Advice for **people who encounter sick or dead wild birds** ▪ Advice for **veterinarians and other animal health professionals** ▪ Risk Management advice for **bird banders, wildlife rangers and researchers** ▪ WHA Fact sheet: **Avian influenza in wild birds in Australia** ▪ **Technical Issue Update – Global High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza Events** (Feb 2022) ▪ **National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines** ▪ Australia's **Wild Bird Avian Influenza Surveillance program** information. ▪ **Bird flu and the future risk to Australian wild birds** (WHA presentation at Australasian Shorebird Conference, 30th October 2022")	

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Meeting with Invasive Species Council

High pathogenicity avian influenza – Australia wildlife preparedness

11 May 2023

Participants

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry	Mark Schipp, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer Bertie Hennecke, Australian Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer s. 22(1)(a)(ii) , Principal Director, OCVO s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Principal Veterinary Officer, OCVO
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Fiona Fraser, Threatened Species Commissioner s. 47F(1) Assistant Director, Office of the TSC s. 47F(1) Assistant Director, Office of the TSC
Wildlife Health Australia	Tiggy Grillo, Chief Operating Officer Simone Vitali, Program Manager - Emergencies
Invasive Species Council	Andrew Cox, Chief Executive Officer Carol Booth, Principal Policy Analyst James Trezise, Conservation Director
Phillip Island Nature Parks	Jessica McKelson, Conservation Manager

Key messages

1. We welcomed ISC's report and are keen to collaborate on the important issues raised.
2. We agree that high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks have resulted in substantial and unusual impacts on wildlife overseas – including threatened and vulnerable wild bird populations.
3. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has been closely monitoring the global situation, particularly the surge in cases and wildlife mortalities, and considering this in the context of Australia's preparedness.
4. We share the Invasive Species Council (ISC's) concern about the potential impacts on Australia's unique wildlife and ecosystems should that virus arrive in Australia, and appreciate the briefing paper shared.
5. In light of this potentially increased threat, a number of activities were initiated by DAFF last year – many aligning with the ISC's recommendations. Other activities recommended by ISC are being further considered and/or will be informed by the results of activities currently in progress.
6. We value the opportunity to discuss respective activities to date, including ISC's briefing paper, and to work together to support Australia's HPAI preparedness with a One Health approach.
7. We likewise value the work being undertaken by the Phillip Island Nature Parks, as articulated in ISC's briefing, and its focus on HPAI preparedness. Opportunities to draw on its experiences and work is appreciated, and further discussions with Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) may be useful.

Sensitivities

While some of the technical detail in the ISC's briefing report may require further review, the meeting with ISC should focus on the key recommendations, exchanging information about respective activities, and discussing scope for further collective action. ISC has presented some valuable recommendations.

Talking points

1. The risk of HPAI viruses entering Australia from overseas via migratory birds has historically been considered low. However, the global situation is unprecedented, including the impacts on wildlife, geographical reach and ongoing nature of outbreaks.

2. The situation means that a number of actions have been initiated, many of which relate to recommendations in the ISC report. This includes:

    a. An expert assessment of the current level of risk (likelihood and consequence) was commissioned last year to better understand the risks in the unique Australian context, with findings due shortly, and will be considered in combination with work undertaken by the Human Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning group [*ISC recommendation 1*].

    a. There is ongoing engagement in international discussions about the use of HPAI vaccination and experiences overseas, including participation at the upcoming World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) General Session focused on HPAI vaccination [*ISC recommendation 2*]

    b. A number of national and other networks are actively focused on monitoring and assessing HPAI risks and preparedness, including the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Steering Committee and the Human Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning group [*ISC recommendation 3, in part*]

    c. There is strong collaboration with WOAH and affected countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, to learn from experiences overseas. There is internationally recognised HPAI expertise within Australia and Australian participation in international discussions, including participation in the WOAH/FAO network of expertise on avian influenza (OFFLU), as well as Australian participation in a recent FAO global consultation on HPAI, and the renewed East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Avian Disease Working Group [*ISC recommendation 5*]

    d. An assessment of the adequacy of general wild bird surveillance activities in Australia has been undertaken through WHA, with findings to be considered shortly. Enhanced general wild bird surveillance and biosecurity is recommended during periods identified as higher risk (e.g. during Austral spring migration). Targeted wild bird surveillance continues at targeted locations, and findings from the risk assessment underway may be used to inform any further review and/or other actions. [*recommendation 8*]

s. 33(a)(iii)

    f. The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy engages with First Nations communities across Northern Australia, including through Indigenous rangers, to monitor and report on morbidity and mortality events, and draw on their extensive and invaluable knowledge of Australia's ecosystems. Avian influenza surveillance activities by NAQS officers have been increased, and stakeholder engagement tools developed to increase awareness and reporting *[ISC recommendation 9*].

3. DAFF is also working with partners to consider further risk-based activities that may be necessary once we have the results of activities. This includes:

    a. further consideration of the use of vaccination in Australia based on experiences overseas [*ISC recommendation 2*]

    b. the development of documented principles and guidelines for HPAI prevention, preparedness and response in Australian wildlife through WHA [*ISC recommendation 4, 6, 7, 9*]

    c. working with partners to identify wild bird species/populations at highest risk of severe impact, complementing disease risk assessments [*ISC recommendation 1*]

4. HPAI preparedness relies on collaboration across countries, sectors, organisations and individuals, and the adoption of a One Health approach – recognising the implications across animal, environmental and human health.
    a. DAFF draws on strong international networks to monitor and learn from the situation abroad, including providing technical advice to affected countries, such as the United Kingdom, to help inform Australia's preparedness.
    b. DAFF will be participating in the upcoming WOAH General Session Animal Health forum on HPAI.
    c. Our discussions with overseas counterparts have also highlighted the importance of expertise, input and collaboration from environmental and conservation partners.
    d. We also continue to engage with human health counterparts.
5. ISC's engagement on HPAI is valued.
    a. The model used to facilitate collaboration within the environmental sector, and across the sectors, is being further considered. The model should complement the valuable networks already in place.
    b. DAFF and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) will continue to work closely together.
6. We would be grateful for information about further plans being progressed or considered by ISC to support HPAI preparedness.

Background

7. In October 2020, H5N1 viruses were detected in Europe after reassortment of H5N8 viruses with wild bird lineage N1 viruses. These viruses have spread globally with the movement of wild migratory birds, and have reassorted with local low pathogenic viruses in many places. In 2022, extensive infection in coastal seabirds and mass die offs of numerous ecologically important species of wild birds was reported. There have also been a number of mammalian infections reported, particularly in scavenging species (FAO 2023).[1] Expected seasonal breaks have not occurred, and the southern most detections have been reported to date (southern Chile).
    a. There have been a dramatic increase in both the number and severity of HPAI outbreaks overseas, including on wildlife. There have been massive wild bird mortality events involving an increasingly diverse range of species, some of them endangered (e.g. Californian Condor in the United States). Reported seabird motilities in the United Kingdom have been in the tens of thousands over 20 species. Mortality events including mammals have been reported worldwide, including large die-offs of over 3000 South American sea lions in contact with sea birds along the Peruvian coast (along with over 22 000 sea bird mortalities off the Peruvian coast).
    b. The impacts of HPAI on wild birds, and wildlife more generally, has been exceptional. This necessitated a contemporary assessment to better understand the current risks in the unique Australian context. In addition to wild birds, the potential risk to Australian mammals particularly marine mammals, in the event of an HPAI outbreak has also been raised, and the situation abroad continues to be monitored. Potential human health concerns are also monitored, in collaboration with human health counterparts.
    c. While experiences abroad (e.g. in the United Kingdom) highlight that there are relatively few available options to manage the impacts of HPAI on wild birds, and their effectiveness remains unclear and success may be dependent on local context; considered and risk-based response

[1] List of bird and mammalian species affected by H5Nx HPAI can be found here.

approaches, drawing on input and ongoing engagement with conservation and environmental groups remain critical.

8. ISC wrote to DAFF and DCCEEW and respective Ministers about preparing for an incursion of HPAI H5 and impacts on wildlife (Attachments A and B). A briefing paper developed by ISC was attached to the correspondence (Attachment C). Responses recognised the current HPAI situation and welcomed a discussion with ISC (Attachments D and E).

9. Recommendations in the briefing paper have been reviewed and discussed by DAFF, DCCEEW (Threatened Species Commissioner's Office) and WHA. A number of these are already underway, and others are being considered or are pending the results of activities in progress (Attachment F).

Attachments

A: Correspondence from ISC to Minister Watt

B: Correspondence from ISC to DAFF (Dep Secretary Dr Chris Locke)

C: ISC briefing paper

D: Ministerial response to ISC

E: Departmental response to ISC

F: Summary of ISC recommendations and actions

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

MS22-001524

To: Minister Watt (For Noting)

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA

Timing: Not applicable

Recommendations:

1. That you note that Australia remains free from high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) viruses that have been causing significant impacts on poultry and wild bird populations in the northern hemisphere.

Noted / Please Discuss

2. That you note that the overall risk of HPAI being introduced to Australia through natural pathways has been considered to be low; however the situation abroad means an increased level of risk to Australia, and there is a higher chance for an introduction of HPAI viruses into Australia compared to previous years when migratory birds return from the northern hemisphere (September – November).

Noted / Please Discuss

3. That you note the significant biosecurity implications and zoonotic potential of HPAI viruses, and the importance of maintaining Australia's vigilance against an incursion.

Noted/Please Discuss

4. That you note that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry continues to monitor the situation, raise awareness, and actively engage with health, biosecurity and industry partners to support Australia's HPAI preparedness amid the dynamic global context.

Noted/Please Discuss

Minister Watt: 

Date: 5/10/22

Comments:

Clearing Officer:	Mark Schipp	Australian Chief Veterinary Officer	Ph: 02 6272 4644 s. 47F(1)
Contact Officer:	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Principal Veterinary Officer, Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer	Ph: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Mol

Key Points:

1. Globally, large and widespread high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks have been causing significant mortalities in poultry and wild bird populations in recent years. Outbreak management and risk mitigation have proven increasingly challenging for affected countries due to the frequency and duration of outbreaks, the increase in diversity of wild bird species infected, and heightened intercontinental movement of the virus.

    a. In 2020/21, over 60 countries and territories were affected by HPAI, with losses of close to 60 million poultry reported via the World Organisation for Animal Health.

    b. Substantial wild bird mortality events were also recorded abroad in 2021/22, including several globally threatened species. Infection has also been reported in a range of mammalian species, including foxes, dolphins and seals.

    c. While the strain of HPAI virus (H5N1) involved in recent outbreaks in the northern hemisphere poses zoonotic risks – that is, it can infect people – only a low number of (mild) human infections have been reported.[1] However, concern remains about the potential for influenza in animals to evolve to a form readily transmissible between humans which could cause another global pandemic.

2. Australia is currently considered free from HPAI. However, avian influenza has been Australia's most frequently occurring emergency animal disease of national significance, with eight HPAI outbreaks in commercial Australian poultry farms since 1976. The most recent outbreak was in Victoria in 2020.

    a. Past outbreaks were most likely caused by low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI)[2] viruses from wild birds, which can mutate into HPAI viruses if introduced into poultry populations.

    b. During Australia's 18-year wild bird avian influenza surveillance program, thousands of Australian wild bird samples have been screened with no HPAI viruses detected.

3. The changing epidemiology of HPAI overseas in recent years means there is likely a higher chance for an introduction of HPAI viruses into Australia compared to previous years. The period of concern for this is when migratory birds return from the northern hemisphere to Australia from September to November.

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[1] WOAH (2022) Avian influenza and wildlife – risk management for people working with wild birds

[2] The use of two categories – LPAI and HPAI – is based on the virus' ability to cause severe disease and mortalities in chickens.

a. While there is evidence that migratory Australian shorebirds that pass through certain regions in Asia can be exposed to the lineage of virus of current concern in the northern hemisphere, there is currently no evidence that these migratory birds are still carrying infectious HPAI viruses when they arrive in Australia.

b. Nonetheless, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) has commissioned work to ensure that Australia's avian influenza early warning, detection and preparedness capabilities are strong in the face of the potentially increased threat.

c. The department continues to engage with biosecurity partners to support Australia's HPAI preparedness. A number of activities are being pursued to *inter alia* evaluate the potential implications resulting from changing global HPAI landscape for Australia, as well as encourage on-going awareness and vigilance (**Attachment A**).

Sensitivities and Handling

4. The department intends to raise awareness of HPAI and the importance of preparedness activities. Communication strategies will seek to encourage good biosecurity practices and stakeholder vigilance for avian influenza on-farm and in wildlife, while managing the potential for undue alarm.

Consultation: YES

5. The department continues to collaborate with members of the international animal health community and biosecurity partners within Australia, including jurisdictional counterparts, the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, Wildlife Health Australia and Animal Health Australia, the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care, and industry bodies.

Legal advice / Legislative impacts:

6. N/A

Financial impacts:

7. A HPAI incursion may be associated with significant financial consequences, including through bird losses and control costs, as well as international trade impacts.

8. HPAI incursions are subject to government–industry cost-sharing under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. The 2020 HPAI outbreak in Australia (Victoria), was associated with an approximate $7.44 million financial contribution from the Australian Government, with $9.97 million total paid including an underwritten contribution to industry parties.

Farmer/Stakeholder Implications:

9. A HPAI incursion in Australia could have significant implications for producers, industry, and the wider community through poultry and other domestic bird losses from the virus or control measures. There are also significant potential implications for wild bird populations and biodiversity, as well as human health.

Opportunities for First Nations people and their communities:

10. The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) program plays an important role in the department's avian influenza activities and engaging with First Nations communities on measures that support effective biosecurity surveillance and other departmental objectives in northern Australia. NAQS collaborates with and relies heavily on the support of Indigenous rangers who have extensive and invaluable knowledge of Australia's ecosystems to help protect Australia's animals, environment and people.

Attachments:

A: High pathogenicity avian influenza activities - summary

Attachment A: High pathogenicity avian influenza activities - summary

1. Given the dynamic global high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) situation, the department has commissioned a program of work through Wildlife Health Australia to enhance Australia's avian influenza early warning, detection and preparedness capabilities. This includes:

    a. reviewing the performance of Australia's ongoing wild bird general surveillance program (National Avian Influenza in Wild Birds, NAIWB, surveillance program), specifically in relation to avian influenza viruses, to identify any additional interventions that may be needed to mitigate heightened threats

    b. undertaking a contemporary risk assessment of currently circulating strains of HPAI, that identifies changes in risk factors and re-assesses the level of risk to Australia

    c. describing Australia's phylogenetic and migratory bird movement analysis capability to effectively respond to a potential novel avian influenza virus incursion via migratory birds

    d. exploring options to future-proof the NAIWB Surveillance Database to ensure the rapid provision of appropriate data.

2. The department continues to contribute to Australia's ongoing national avian influenza wild bird surveillance program by conducting targeted surveillance (collecting environmental samples from non-migratory and migratory wild birds) across northern Australia through the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy program.

3. The department also continues to collaborate with overseas counterparts and participate in international technical networks to access the latest disease intelligence and learn from experiences abroad. The department's Pacific engagement program likewise continues to strengthen linkages with neighbouring countries to ensure the rapid exchange of intelligence on avian influenza in poultry and wild birds, including information about wild bird movements.

4. The department intends to raise the profile of avian influenza in communications to key stakeholders and in public messaging to increase awareness and encourage vigilance both on-farm and in wildlife. The department will also recommend biosecurity partners – including industry bodies and jurisdictional government departments – do likewise.

    a. Infection of birds with influenza A viruses is nationally notifiable, and surveillance in poultry relies on clinical signs initiating disease investigations and laboratory testing. There is currently no active surveillance program for avian influenza in Australian poultry.

    b. A public webinar on avian influenza is planned to be held in October 2022 as part of the department's biosecurity webinar series.

5. Collaboration with human public health colleagues continues. The Human-Animal Spillover and Emerging Diseases Scanning group is monitoring the global avian

influenza situation and potential implications. This group, initiated by the department, comprises experts on human, animal and environmental health.

6. The department supports several epidemiology and modelling research activities on understanding avian influenza risk to Australian poultry and improving response to HPAI outbreaks; and is also supporting a collaborative project exploring the application of environmental DNA sampling and testing for avian influenza.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

MS23-001038

To: Minister Watt (For Noting)

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA - SITUATION UPDATE

Timing: Not applicable

Recommendation/s:

1. That you note Australia remains free from high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI), including the H5N1 2.3.4.4b clade that has been responsible for extensive losses of poultry and wild birds, as well as many spillover cases in mammals and sporadic human infections overseas.

Noted / Please discuss

2. That you note that Indonesia has reported a 2022 H5N1 outbreak in a Kalimantan duck farm, s. 33(a)(iii)

Noted / Please discuss

3. That you note that Indonesia was not previously considered free from HPAI, and as such biosecurity settings for regulated imports to Australia do not require change – current import conditions continue to manage biosecurity risks appropriately.

Noted / Please discuss

4. That you note that the department continues to actively monitor the dynamic situation abroad. It is partnering with other agencies and key stakeholders to consider the potential risks to Australia through natural (wild bird) pathways and evaluate the need for changes to biosecurity activities, including any further regional support.

Noted / Please discuss

Minister Watt: **Date:**

Comments:

Clearing Officer:	Dr Beth Cookson	A/g Australian Chief Veterinary Officer	Ph: 07 4241 7982 Mob: s. 47F(1)
Contact Officer:	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Principal Veterinary Officer, OCVO	Ph: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Mob: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Key Points:

1. Australia and Antarctica remain the only continents on which H5N1 2.3.4.4b has not been detected, with the virus spreading widely since 2020 – moving from central Asia into Europe, eastern Asia, the Middle East and Africa, as well as into the Americas (**MS23-000554**; **MS22-001524**).

    a. Outbreak management and risk mitigation in affected countries have proven challenging due to factors such as the increasing frequency and duration of outbreaks, the increase in wild bird species affected and the increased geographical movement of the virus. This clade has been responsible for extensive losses of poultry and wild birds, as well as many spillover cases in mammals and sporadic human infections overseas.

    b. Migration of wild birds (particularly ducks and geese) have been implicated in the intercontinental spread of this clade.

    c. The risk of HPAI viruses from abroad entering Australia via migratory birds has previously been considered low, noting the absence of waterfowl species that regularly migrate between Australia and Asia. However, a contemporary expert risk assessment was commissioned by the department through Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) given the current global situation. The findings will be used to consider what further risk-based activities may be indicated in the lead up to the next period of potentially heightened risks when migratory shorebirds birds return to Australia from the northern hemisphere (September – November).

2. In May 2023, Indonesia officially reported a H5N1 outbreak from over a year prior (April 2022) caused by a new strain in a duck farm in Kalimantan via the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH).

s. 33(a)(iii)

    b. Biosecurity settings for regulated import pathways from Indonesia (that is, imports of poultry meat, feathers and other potential risk items to Australia) do not require change. Indonesia was not previously considered free from HPAI and current import conditions continue to manage biosecurity risks appropriately.

    c. The presence of this clade in Indonesia is notable, particularly if it persists in poultry populations and/or becomes prevalent in wild bird populations in the region. If this virus establishes in wild bird populations in Indonesia, there is potential for it to move between islands towards Australia via waterfowl such as wild ducks.

s. 33(a)(iii)

3. A range of activities are in place to support Australia's preparedness.

    a. Challenges in relation to animal health services in the region – including undertaking surveillance activities and/or obtaining and sharing results in a timely manner – highlight the importance of the department's strong networks and engagement in the region for intelligence gathering and early warning.

    b. The department works with near neighbours in Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea providing technical and financial support for animal disease investigations, and working collaboratively on the ground with counterparts to conduct surveillance for diseases such as HPAI.

    c. Australia conducts surveillance for avian influenza in wild birds via the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) program[1], which is coordinated by WHA and funded by the department, with significant in-kind contributions from partner organisations. Several thousand of wild bird samples are tested each year and no high pathogenicity viruses have been detected, including in northern Australia through the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS).

4. Separate to the situation in Indonesia, the Invasive Species Council (ISC) had raised concern about the potential impacts a HPAI outbreak would have on Australian wildlife, and the status of Australia's preparedness (**MC23-006711**).

    a. The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer (ACVO) and the Australian Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer (ACEBO), together with the Threatened Species Commissioner (Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, DCCEEW) and WHA met with ISC on 11 May 2023 to discuss its recommendations and respective activities.

    b. Many ISC recommendations related to actions that had already been initiated by the department. Other recommendations are being further considered and/or will be informed by activities in progress as part of a risk-based approach.

    c. The ACEBO will continue to engage with ISC and other relevant conservation/wildlife stakeholders, in collaboration with DCCEEW. As part of this, further consideration will be given to the use of established networks to ensure collaboration with environmental and wildlife stakeholders, such as ISC; and consider further investment in additional preparedness work such as identifying wild bird species and populations at highest risk of severe impact in the event of a HPAI outbreak in Australia.

5. The department continues to harness its strong international networks to monitor the dynamic global situation and potential implications, provide support aboard, and help ensure Australia's preparedness.

    a. Discussions about HPAI continue to feature prominently in international fora, including the 90th WOAH General Session on 21 – 25 May 2023 where it was the theme and subject of a dedicated Animal Health Forum.

[1] Wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/ProgramsProjects/WildBirdSurveillance.aspx

b. The ACVO led the Australian delegation's participation, and a debrief will be held to share insights from the Animal Health Forum with government and industry partners.

Public Sensitivities:

s. 33(a)(ii)

7. The department continues to raise awareness of HPAI and the importance of good biosecurity and preparedness with domestic stakeholders, while managing the potential for undue alarm, and reiterating Australia's ongoing freedom from HPAI.

Consultation: YES

8. The department continues to work closely with key partners to monitor and manage the risks of HPAI to Australia's animals, environment, and people. This includes the Department of Health and Aged Care, DCCEEW, jurisdictional agriculture agencies, WHA, Animal Health Australia, the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, and industry stakeholders.

Legal advice / Legislative impacts:

9. N/A

Financial impacts:

10. Existing programs including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Australia-Indonesia Health Security Partnership and the department's international programs for animal health can be leveraged to support near neighbours through the provision of technical advice. However, additional funding would be needed to support longer-term response assistance if requested by countries in the region.

11. In the event of an HPAI incursion in Australia, there may be significant financial impacts, including as a result of bird losses, control costs, and trade and tourism impacts.

Farmer/Stakeholder Implications:

12. An HPAI outbreak in Australia could have significant implications for producers, industry and the wider community through poultry and other captive bird losses from the virus and/or control measures. There are also significant implications for wild bird populations and ecosystem health, as well as spillover to mammals, and potentially human health.

Opportunities for First Nations people and their communities:

13. NAQS plays an important role in the department's avian influenza and stakeholder engagement activities, particularly engaging with First Nations communities on measures that support effective biosecurity surveillance and other departmental objectives in northern Australia. NAQS collaborates with and relies heavily on the support of Indigenous rangers who have extensive and invaluable knowledge of Australia's ecosystems to help protect Australia's animals, environment and people.

Climate Change and Environmental Considerations:

14. An HPAI outbreak in Australia could have significant implications for wild birds, biodiversity and the environment. Recent outbreaks abroad have caused significant mortalities in wild bird populations, including threatened species. The ACEBO continues to liaise with DCCEEW on matters relating to environmental biosecurity, including HPAI. This includes the need to identify priority wild bird species and populations at highest risk of severe outbreak in the event of a HPAI outbreak in Australia.

15. The wildlife, ecosystem and environmental impacts of a HPAI outbreak could also have significant social, economic (tourism) and cultural implications.

OFFICIAL

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

MS24-000168

To: Minister Watt (For Noting)

OPTIONS TO IMPROVE HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

Timing: 10 May 2024

Recommendations:

1. That you **note** that the risks of an incursion of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in Australia have increased and the preparedness activities that are underway.

Noted / Please discuss

s. 47C(1)

Noted / Please discuss

3. That you **note** that the options will be further refined following consultation with stakeholders at a 1 May 2024 meeting of the National Coordination Mechanism (NCM) under the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework on HPAI preparedness.

Noted / Please discuss

4. That you **note** that departmental officials are available to brief you and your office on the outcomes of the NCM meeting.

Pls arrange this with my office.

Noted / Please discuss

Minister Watt: [signature] **Date:** 16/5/24.

Comments: The brief suggests there is nothing more we can do to prevent HPAI entering Australia. Please advise if there is anything we could do.

Clearing Officer:	Justine Saunders APM	Deputy Secretary, Biosecurity and Compliance Group	Ph: 02 6272 4710 Mob: s. 47F(1)
Contact Officer:	Dr Beth Cookson	Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Australian Chief Veterinary Office	Ph: 07 4241 7982 Mob: s. 47F(1)

Key Points:

1. Australia is currently free of HPAI in poultry according to international standards. However, the department is closely monitoring HPAI outbreaks overseas, caused by a specific strain called HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b. Since 2020, there have been outbreaks of this strain in all continents apart from Australia.

2. Long distance spread is likely to involve transmission of the virus through infected wild birds. There is no way to prevent new strains of avian influenza entering Australia with migratory wild birds, or transmission between wild birds.

3. Outbreaks of this strain overseas have led to extensive losses of poultry, and illness and death of wild birds and some mammals, particularly marine mammals. Although disease has been mild, recent detections of this strain in dairy cattle in the United States have been reported in farms in eight states. A small number of human infections have been reported overseas. Most cases have been mild, and this strain does not appear to transmit easily between humans.

4. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) has invested in national activities to improve Australia's preparedness for HPAI since 2006, following the emergence and spread of H5 HPAI viruses in Southeast Asia and the establishment of an Avian Influenza Taskforce, funded through a New Policy Proposal which provided $44.2 million over three years from 2006-07. Recent information on the department's program of work is outlined in **MS23-001038; MS23-000554** and **MS22-001524**. A summary of the national state of preparedness for HPAI in animals is provided at **Attachment B**.

5. In 2023, Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) published a risk assessment, that was commissioned by the department, that concluded there is an increased risk of H5 HPAI being introduced into poultry in Australia by wild birds.

6. Because of the likely cross-sectoral impacts affecting both industry and wildlife, and the possibility of occasional human cases, strong collaboration and coordination is required across all levels of government, industry and other stakeholders. The department has been working within existing networks to raise awareness of the risk and improve preparedness using a One Health approach, however with the escalating risk more decisive action is being finalised to ensure improved preparedness across all sectors and to address known gaps.

7. Australia has well established and practised emergency response plans for avian influenza in poultry. Australia has responded to 8 HPAI outbreaks in poultry in the past. These have been unrelated to the H5 HPAI viruses circulating overseas. Preparedness and response arrangements for avian influenza, including the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN) are in place and under regular review to ensure they remain contemporary and fit for purpose.

8. In 2022, the department funded WHA to establish a One Health Investigation Fund, as part of an $8.4 million grant over 4 years. This has supported further testing of wild birds for avian influenza and publication of key communications and guidance documents on HPAI for wildlife stakeholders.

9. The department has convened a NCM meeting under the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework to discuss preparedness for HPAI and to identify priorities to enhance Australia's preparedness. A meeting of Australian Government agencies was held on 18 April 2024. A second meeting with state and territory governments and non-governmental organisations is planned for 1 May 2024.

10. State and territory governments, through the Animal Health Committee (AHC) have recently reviewed the status of national preparedness for HPAI. AHC identified several activities for its 2024 work plan, including enhancing surveillance and preparedness for outbreaks of HPAI affecting wildlife, reviewing national preparedness initiatives (i.e. vaccination, response capacity and the social acceptability of methods of destroying animals), and implementing a national communications strategy.

s. 47C(1)

Public Sensitivities:

12. Outbreaks of this strain of HPAI have had severe impacts on biodiversity overseas. Mass deaths of wild birds and mammals have affected social amenity. Nationally, state and territory departments of environment are responsible for managing threatened wildlife species. Existing national biosecurity response measures, such as the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement, only apply when it is considered that the disease is eradicable, which may not be the case if HPAI becomes widespread in wild birds. Developing emergency response structures amongst national departments of environment, and appropriate contingency plans for managing mortality events is likely to be an action identified in the NCM on 1 May 2024.

13. The World Health Organization of the United Nations and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention consider that the public health risk of this strain of H5 HPAI viruses is low. The Communicable Diseases Network of Australia has published guidelines on prevention of exposure to infected birds, and Food Standards Australia New Zealand has developed statements on its website about the safety of food during an outbreak. s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

14. The Australian poultry industries have proposed that ventilation shutdown (VSD) methods be considered for use in Australia to destroy poultry in the event of large-scale outbreaks. These methods have been used in some countries overseas, but serious animal welfare implications have led to criticisms of government agencies implementing these methods. s. 47C(1)
s. 47C(1)

Consultation: YES

15. Biosecurity Animal Division, Enterprise Strategy and Governance Division, and Finance Division were consulted in the development of this minute. Animal Health Australia and Wildlife Health Australia were also consulted in the development of these options. Consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and state and territory agriculture, environmental and health agencies will occur through the NCM meeting on 1 May 2024.

Legal advice / Legislative impacts:

16. NIL

Financial impacts:

s. 47C(1)

Farmer/Stakeholder Implications:

19. An outbreak of this strain in Australia is expected to have far-reaching impacts beyond the poultry industries. People with backyard poultry, aviary and show birds could also be affected. If this strain became established in wild birds in Australia, we expect to see an increase in the frequency of outbreaks in domestic poultry and impacts on wildlife populations. This would result in a higher cost to industry and government to manage this disease.

Opportunities for First Nations people and their communities:

20. First Nations people have a deep spiritual connection to Australia's wildlife. Ensuring that mortality events due to HPAI are reported and appropriately managed will minimise harms to First Nations communities. The National Indigenous Australians Agency has been engaged in the NCM process. The Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer will

develop guidance material on culturally appropriate engagement of First Nations peoples in emergency animal disease responses in its 2024-25 work program.

Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

21. The Animal Health Committee and the Environment and Invasives Committee have stood up a joint working group to consider the governance of outbreaks affecting poultry and/or wildlife.

22. The department has engaged with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water through the Threatened Species Commissioner, Australian Antarctic Division and Parks Australia. Further work is required to identify wildlife species that may be threatened by HPAI and to ensure environment departments are engaged in the emergency response decision making process.

Attachments:

s. 47C(1)
s. 47E(d)

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Division: Biosecurity Animal Division

BAD03

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA

CAVEAT – THIS KIB WILL NEED TO BE UPDATED AS THE SITUATION IN VICTORIA EVOLVES

CURRENT ISSUE

Australian outbreak

- On 22 May 2024, the Victorian Government confirmed an outbreak of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) on a poultry farm near Meredith in the Golden Plains Shire.
- On 24 May 2024, a second Victorian poultry farm near Terang was confirmed to have HPAI as a result of Agriculture Victoria's tracing activities. This property is approximately 110km from Meredith.
- Testing at the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) determined the outbreak at the index or first premises in Victoria was caused by a strain of HPAI H7N3. The virus on the second poultry farm was found to be a strain of HPAI H7N9, a different strain of the virus.
- The outbreaks in Victoria are not the same strain of HPAI – H5 designated clade 2.3.4.4b – causing concern globally.
- The virus that caused the 2020 HPAI outbreak in the Golden Plains Shire, Victoria was a strain of HPAI H7N7.
- On 24 May 2024 it was reported that Western Australia had detected a low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) strain on a poultry property. This strain was identified as H9N2 and is unrelated to the outbreak in Victoria.

Outbreaks overseas

Since 2020, HPAI H5 designated clade 2.3.4.4b has caused significant deaths of poultry, wild birds, and wild mammals overseas. Sporadic human infections have been reported. In March 2024, this strain was reported in dairy cattle and goats

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SB24-000108

for the first time globally in the United States of America (US). RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

Australian outbreak

- Since 1976, there have been 8 previous outbreaks of HPAI in commercial poultry in Australia. These were all quickly and successfully eradicated with minimal spread among poultry farms.
- Australia has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza outbreaks. This includes having established cost-sharing arrangements and relevant AUSVETPLAN response strategies.
- The Australian Government is supporting the Victorian Government's response to the HPAI outbreak. Affected industries are also involved when an outbreak occurs and have a role in the decision-making processes during the response.
- An Emergency Animal Disease Response Plan (EADRP) proposing to eradicate the HPAI outbreak in Victoria has been reviewed and endorsed by the National Management Group. This means the response effort that is already underway will be eligible for cost sharing under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).
- Due to the disease outbreak and necessary response there may be some flow on effects to supply, however the egg industry is resilient and we have seen some expansion of large farms in recent years, so this increased capacity should help with any supply issues,
- In Australia, LPAI viruses are naturally carried by wild birds, usually waterfowl such as ducks, without causing or showing signs of disease. There has been no indication of an unusual disease event in Australian wild birds leading up to this outbreak.
- Pre-emptive culling of wild birds is not an appropriate response to these incidents, as it is not known to have any impact on the spread of the disease.

Trade Impacts

- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) has notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of both the H7N3 (on 23 May 2024) and H7N9 detections (on 25 May 2024), consistent with our international obligations.
- The Department is also in the process of formally notifying trading partners of the incident.
- Effective from 24 May 2024, the Department temporarily suspended the issuing of health certificates for all avian and ratite (emu) meat, meat products, by-products, eggs and egg products, live birds and some reproductive material requiring

certification for freedom from notifiable avian influenza (as the disease is now present).

- In the early stages of an emergency animal disease response, and while initial tracing and surveillance is underway, export certification may be restricted more broadly than later in the outbreak, to ensure that affected product is not exported to trading partners and that importing country requirements are being met.
- In addition, importing countries may seek further information regarding management activities and choose to put additional temporary trade suspensions or restrictions in place.
- The department will work with trading partners and export industries as a priority to manage trade impacts and will review the temporary suspension as the outbreak is contained and eradicated.

- The department will work with individual exporters where consignments have been detained overseas on a consignment-by-consignment basis.

Outbreaks overseas

- We are closely monitoring HPAI outbreaks overseas.
  - Since 2020, there have been outbreaks of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b virus in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, South America and Antarctica.
  - Outbreaks overseas have led to extensive losses of poultry, illness and death of wild birds and mammals, particularly marine mammals and mammals that prey or scavenge on birds. HPAI H5 has recently been reported in dairy cattle and goats in the US.
  - HPAI H5 viruses have never been detected in wild birds, poultry or livestock in Australia.
- A small number of human infections with HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b viruses have been reported globally. Most of these people had close contact with infected birds or dairy cattle and contaminated environments. Current strains of avian influenza do not appear to transmit easily between humans.
- It is believed that wild birds are involved in long-distance spread of the 2.3.4.4b strain.
- In March 2024, the 2.3.4.4b strain was reported in cattle and goats for the first time globally in the US.
  - The department is receiving updates on the situation directly from the US Government.

- As of 28 May 2024, it has been reported in dairy herds in 9 states of the US, and virus fragments have been found in retail milk samples.
- All dairy products imported from the US are subject to a range of risk management measures, including milk being treated using an approved method of pasteurisation, which can inactivate the HPAI virus.
- Standard conditions for composite, highly processed, and cooked products which include dairy ingredients (such as chocolate and cakes) will manage the risks of HPAI in goods for human consumption.

- There is no way to prevent new strains of avian influenza viruses entering Australia with wild birds, or transmission between wild birds. However, Australia has surveillance programs in place to monitor the emergence and spread of avian influenza viruses. This includes undertaking surveillance in wild birds through the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program.
- Australia also has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza. This includes having established cost-sharing arrangements and relevant AUSVETPLAN response strategies.
- In addition, the Australian Government is coordinating national activities to improve awareness and preparedness for further HPAI outbreaks, including for the 2.3.4.4b strain. This includes:
  - utilising the National Coordination Mechanism to organise HPAI preparedness meetings on 15 April and 1 May 2024.
    - Organised by the National Emergency Management Agency, these meetings included participants from the department, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Emergency Management Agency, as well as relevant state and territory government agencies as required.
    - The meetings allowed for a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies including the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for a cross-sectoral emergency response. This is in line with the difficulties seen in managing outbreaks of the H5 2.3.4.4b virus in other countries.
  - considering potential impacts of HPAI on Australia's unique fauna, and any additional preparedness and response arrangements that might be warranted
  - working with poultry industries to improve preparedness
  - supporting Wildlife Health Australia to deliver awareness materials and risk management guidance relevant to wildlife managers and increase surveillance in wild birds

- the Department continuing to work closely with relevant agencies on HPAI preparedness and response activities including the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the National Emergency Management Agency
- working with state and territory governments to increase the likelihood of an HPAI event being detected early through surveillance, noting that state and territory governments are responsible for disease surveillance and control within their borders
- collaborating with countries that have experienced outbreaks of the HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b strain to learn from their experiences
- On 13 June 2024, Animal Health Australia is convening a government-poultry industry roundtable on preparedness activities, with a focus on HPAI H5 Clade 2.3.4.4b
- This is a further demonstration of the collaborative national approach we take to these threats to our biosecurity status and our vital agricultural sector.

Human case in Australia

- I am aware of the case of HPAI in a young child confirmed on 18 May 2024 by the Victorian Department of Health.
- Thankfully the child has made a full recovery, and I would note that the patient acquired the infection overseas and became unwell on returning to Australia in March 2024. No family members in Australia or overseas have reported symptoms.
- Avian influenza does not easily infect humans and any potential infectious period from the Australian case has now passed. There is no ongoing public health risk from this case.
- Importantly, while the Victorian case is HPAI H5, it is not the same as the HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b strains that are of animal health concern overseas. Nor is it in any way related to the current outbreak of HPAI in poultry in Victoria.

Human health risks

- Eggs, poultry and game meat are safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked as per standard food handling practices.
- In Australia there is a very low risk of people becoming infected with avian influenza viruses through normal contact with healthy birds.
- People should avoid direct contact with birds or mammals that are sick or have died unexpectedly and use good hygiene measures for handling and disposing of dead birds or mammals.

BACKGROUND

- The source of Australia's HPAI outbreaks is believed to be low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses introduced via local wild birds, which evolved to HPAI viruses after circulating in poultry.
  - These outbreaks were not caused by HPAI H5 viruses from overseas.
- A risk assessment finalised in June 2023 concluded there is an increased risk of the 2.3.4.4b strain being introduced into Australia by wild birds.
  - There are several factors that contributed to this, such as more species of birds and mammals being infected by this strain in outbreaks overseas
  - It is also expected that outbreaks of HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b would have more severe impacts on Australia's wildlife and poultry industries than we have seen with previous outbreaks of HPAI in Australia
  - The report is available on Wildlife Health Australia's website.
- On 22 May 2024 a Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) meeting was held. The CCEAD agreed that the current outbreak is eradicable and endorsed Victoria's EADRP.
- The CCEAD submitted a paper to the National Management Group (NMG) seeking agreement to cost share the response costs under the EADRA.
- On 23 May 2024 an NMG meeting was held. The NMG endorsed the request to share the response costs for the eradication of the HPAI outbreak in Victoria under the EADRA.
- On 24 May 2024 a second CCEAD meeting was held which considered the response to the second detection near Terang, Victoria.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Back Pocket Brief

Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer

Brief current as of 28 May 2024

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) AND WILDLIFE

KEY FACTS

- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is closely monitoring outbreaks of a strain of HPAI, known as H5 clade 2.3.4.4b, which has now been reported on all continents except Australia.
- In early 2022, the department commissioned an expert assessment of the current level of risk (likelihood and consequence) to Australia, and the adequacy of current wild bird general surveillance activities, as part of a suite of activities to support our HPAI preparedness, delivered by Wildlife Health Australia (WHA).
- In May 2023, the Invasive Species Council (ISC) shared a briefing paper on their concern about the potential impacts on Australia's unique wildlife and ecosystems should HPAI arrive in Australia. These were consistent with activities that were already underway nationally. The recommendations of this paper are provided at Attachment A.
- The Australian Government is coordinating national activities to improve awareness and preparedness for further HPAI outbreaks, including for the 2.3.4.4b strain. The ISC recommendations have been considered in the implementation of these activities.

TALKING POINTS

If asked, do you think an outbreak of H5 HPAI is inevitable?

- The risk of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b to Australian wildlife and poultry has increased since the emergence and spread of this strain globally. However, with all unregulated pathways of disease entry through migratory birds, there is a high degree of uncertainty in the likelihood of it entering into Australia.
- Different times of year will pose different levels of risk e.g. there is usually an increase in migratory bird numbers in Spring. There are a greater number of wildlife species that have developed the infection globally with larger and ongoing outbreaks overseas. However, it has been circulating globally for a few years and no cases have been detected in Australia. Therefore it is difficult to say with certainty about timing or speculating on entry of this disease.

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If asked, what is the assessed HPAI risk for native birds and mammals?

- In 2022, in response to global spread of a new clade of HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b causing extensive losses in poultry and wild birds overseas, the department commissioned an expert assessment of the current level of risk (likelihood and consequences) from HPAI to Australia. The report concluded that:
    - The overall risk (likelihood and consequence) of HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b incursions into Australia via wild birds with establishment in wild birds was assessed as high with moderate uncertainty. Uncertainty is a measure of the availability and quality of information used to make the assessment. The lower the uncertainty, the better the availability and quality of information available.
    - The overall risk (likelihood and consequence) of HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b incursions into Australia via wild birds with establishment in wild mammals was assessed as low with high uncertainty.
    - Compared to previously assessments the risk has changed based on a moderate increase in the likelihood of entry and exposure of HPAI with a significant increase in the projected consequence of HPAI incursions, due to the expected scale of impacts on wild bird populations. Risks to non-human mammals have not been explicitly considered in previous Australian risk assessments.
    - The department agrees that the risk has increased since previous risk assessments (which concluded that the risk was low) and is working with stakeholders to raise awareness and identify and address any gaps in response preparedness.

If asked, what is the Australian Government doing to prepare for the potential arrival of HPAI and mass mortalities in wild bird populations?

- There is no way to prevent new strains of avian influenza viruses entering Australia with wild birds, or transmission between wild birds.
- Australia has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza. Response activities in wildlife are covered by these arrangements, although we have never experienced a situation where there have been concurrent impacts on a livestock industry and native wildlife.
- The Australian Government is coordinating national activities to improve awareness and preparedness for a potential HPAI event, including HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b. This includes:
    - Utilising the National Coordination Mechanism to organise HPAI preparedness meetings on 15 April and 1 May 2024.
        - These meetings were co-chaired by the National Emergency Management Agency and the department. They included participants

from the department, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Emergency Management Agency, as well as other Australian Government agencies and relevant state and territory government agencies.

  - The meetings allowed for a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies including the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for a cross-sectoral emergency response. This is in line with the difficulties seen in managing outbreaks of the H5 2.3.4.4b virus in other countries.

  - The department is chairing a joint committee between the Animal Health Committee and the Environment and Invasives Committee to clarify cross-sectoral preparedness and response arrangements for HPAI outbreaks.

- Considering potential impacts of HPAI on Australia's unique fauna, and any additional preparedness and response arrangements that might be warranted.

- Working with state and territory governments to determine appropriate governance and coordination mechanisms for a cross-sectoral emergency response. There are existing arrangements for both the animal health and environmental biosecurity sectors.

- Working with state and territory governments to increase the likelihood of an HPAI event being detected early through surveillance.

- Working with poultry industries to improve preparedness.

- Supporting WHA to deliver awareness materials and risk management guidance relevant to wildlife managers and increase surveillance in wild birds.

- Working with the public health sector to determine appropriate arrangements should the human health risk increase.

- Collaborating with countries that have experienced outbreaks of the HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b strain to learn from their experiences.

- Guidance specific to wildlife is available from WHA, and includes:

  - National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines

  - National Guidelines for Management of Disease in Free-ranging Australian Wildlife

  - Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and Wild Animals in Australia - a Risk Mitigation Toolbox for Wildlife Managers

- The NAQS animal health surveillance team has increased surveillance and testing for serious animal diseases. This includes extra investment in
    - LSD surveillance and Avian Influenza testing which has helped support Australia's proof of freedom and contributed to Australia maintaining market access.
    - Increased surveillance reach for exotic Avian Influenza, establishing a targeted monitoring network in the Torres Strait, utilising the Indigenous ranger networks in Northern Australia to complete Avian Influenza sampling, initiating external territory Avian Influenza sampling and identifying innovative methods to improve detection capability in the north.
- The Post-Entry Quarantine facility at Mickleham has seen a decrease in the avian consignment bird numbers compared to previous years. This is primarily due to the impact of HPAI outbreaks overseas resulting in several cancellations. This is because companies cannot meet our pre-export requirements in relation to Avian Influenza overseas. This shows our stringent border measures are working for managing the regulated pathways of hatching eggs, live bird imports (turkeys, ducks) etc.

If asked, does Australia have plans to vaccinate wildlife in the event of an HPAI outbreak?

- Australia does not currently have plans to vaccinate endangered wildlife against avian influenza.
- However, the Animal Health Committee is currently reviewing the National Avian Influenza Vaccination Policy and Procedures. We are also in monitoring the outcomes of a New Zealand government trial of avian influenza vaccines in New Zealand wild bird species.

BACKGROUND

- The department has engaged with the ISC on HPAI on numerous occasions over the last 12 months. Most recently, a representative was present for an update on HPAI at the Environmental Biosecurity Advisory Group Meeting in April 2024.
- A comprehensive Question on Notice from Senator Whish-Wilson was submitted after the Supplementary Budget Estimates in October 2023. s. 47C(1) The finalised responses are provided at Attachment B.
- The department is currently progressing funding arrangements with WHA to provide an additional $580,000 to enable further preparedness work on HPAI. The activities to be undertaken include:
    - Improve detection capabilities for HPAI in wildlife - expand risk-based targeted surveillance for HPAI in wildlife.

- Improve detection capabilities for HPAI in wildlife - Uplift national collation and analysis.
- Develop and update nationally-agreed guidance to support triage of wildlife mortality and outbreak investigations.
- Pilot a wildlife mortality reporting platform for the general public in at least one jurisdiction.
- Support development, revision and implementation of contingency plans and training resources to better enable response to HPAI in wildlife in conjunction and consultation with environmental and biosecurity authorities, local governments and other stakeholders.

ATTACHMENT A: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL APRIL 2023 HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA IN WILDLIFE: IS AUSTRALIA PREPARED? AND RELEVANT DEPARTMENTAL ACTIONS

ATTACHMENT B: QUESTIONS ON NOTICE SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES SQ23-000889

ATTACHMENT A

Recommendations from Invasive Species Council April 2023 *High pathogenicity avian influenza in wildlife: Is Australia prepared?* and relevant departmental actions.

Risk assessments

1. The Australian Government commission an expert assessment of the risks of high pathogenicity avian influenza for Australian wild birds and mammals, including threatened species.

    - The department commissioned an expert risk assessment, which was published by WHA in 2023.

2. As part of the risk assessment for wildlife, review the potential benefits and risks for wild birds of the vaccination of poultry against avian influenza. Do not permit vaccination if it will increase the disease risks for wildlife.

    - The department and the Animal Health Committee are currently reviewing the National Avian Influenza Vaccination Policy and Procedures, which includes guidance on vaccination of captive wild birds.

National wildlife taskforce

3. To coordinate a national response to the risks of high pathogenicity avian influenza for wildlife, the Australian Government establish a national taskforce, with membership including environmental and biosecurity agencies from all governments, WHA, other wildlife and disease experts (including veterinarians), zoo organisations involved in captive breeding and environmental NGOs.

    - The department is receiving expert advice on the risks of HPAI in wildlife from WHA and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

National wildlife response plan

4. The national wildlife taskforce prepare and oversee the implementation of a national wildlife response plan for avian influenza.

    - The department is preparing to fund WHA to support development, revision and implementation of contingency plans and training resources to better enable response to HPAI in wildlife in conjunction and consultation with environmental and biosecurity authorities, local governments and other stakeholders.

    - WHA will also develop and update nationally-agreed guidance to support triage of wildlife mortality and outbreak investigations.

5. The national taskforce review measures applied in and experiences with avian influenza outbreaks in overseas bird colonies to learn what was effective, what to avoid and how to optimise recovery afterwards.

- This will be addressed as part of the action mentioned for recommendation 4.

6. In developing a national response plan for wildlife, the national taskforce consider measures of the following types:

   (a) monitoring, reporting and research

   (b) regulating human access and activities

   (c) removing and disposing of dead birds

   (d) rescuing and euthanasing wildlife

   (e) response planning for local colonies

   (f) keeping humans safe and building public awareness

   (g) vaccinating captive-bred colonies of threatened species.

- This will be addressed as part of the action mentioned for recommendation 4.

Local response plans

7. Australian governments encourage and provide resources for managers of sites with high concentrations of shorebirds, waterbirds or seabirds to prepare local response plans for avian influenza outbreaks in wild birds, guided by advice from the national wildlife taskforce.

- This will be addressed as part of the action mentioned for recommendation 4.

Surveillance

8. The national wildlife taskforce review the 2023 avian influenza surveillance program and provide advice about supplementary surveillance priorities for wild bird populations, including seabirds. This could be supplemented by surveillance, in cooperation with international partners, along inward migration pathways and in the Southern Ocean.

- The department is preparing to fund WHA to improve detection capabilities for HPAI in wildlife by expanding risk-based targeted surveillance for HPAI in wildlife, uplifting national collation and analysis, and piloting a wildlife mortality reporting platform for the general public in at least one jurisdiction.

9. The national wildlife taskforce develop a program to encourage surveillance by indigenous rangers, birdwatchers, land managers and researchers, particularly in remote locations.

- This will be addressed as part of the action mentioned for recommendation 8.

ATTACHMENT B

Hearing: Supplementary Budget Estimates
Question No: SQ23-000889

Outcome: Outcome 2
Division/Agency: Biosecurity Strategy and Reform Division (BSRD) G3
Topic: Biosecurity (HPAI)

Hansard Page:
Question Date: 02 November 2023
Question Type: Written

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson asked:

- Question 1: What is the assessed HPAI risk for native birds and mammals?
- Question 2: Please provide a copy of the risk assessment and any associated documents about the risk.
- Question 3: What is the Australian Government doing to prepare for the potential arrival of HPAI and mass mortalities in wild bird colonies?
- Question 4: Is there a national response plan setting out the recommended measures for monitoring and minimising the risks for native birds?
- Question 5: If an outbreak was to occur today – say in a remote wetland in northern Australia – is Australia prepared? What would be the initial response?
- Question 6: Do the managers of land with potentially susceptible birds know what to look out for and what to do? For example, has there been liaison with Indigenous rangers?
- Question 7: Have the priority risk sites (e.g with colonies of potentially susceptible or threatened species) been identified and have a local response plan?
- Question 8: Is there a communications plan to alert Australians so they know what to look out for, how to report suspicious bird sickness and death and how to keep safe?
- Question 9: Is there a research plan so that Australia can learn as much as possible about the disease and its impacts and test mitigation strategies should HPAI arrive?
- Question 10: Has there been an assessment of the pros and cons of vaccinating captive bred colonies of threatened bird species? If this will help protect them, is Australia well prepared to act expeditiously by having vaccines at hand?
- Question 11: Considering the emergency funding that became available with the arrival of FMD in Indonesia, has the department considered what amount of emergency response funding would be required if HPAI arrived in Australia? Can DAFF support this?

ANSWER:

1. In 2022, in response to global spread of a new clade of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b) causing extensive losses in poultry and wild birds overseas, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) commissioned an expert assessment of the current level of risk (likelihood and consequences) from HPAI to Australia. The report concluded that:
    - The overall risk (likelihood and consequence) of HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b incursions into Australia via wild birds with establishment in wild birds was assessed as high with moderate uncertainty. Uncertainty is a measure of the

availability and quality of information used to make the assessment. The lower the uncertainty, the better the availability and quality of information available.

- The overall risk (likelihood and consequence) of HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b incursions into Australia via wild birds with establishment wild mammals was assessed as low with high uncertainty.
- Compared to previously assessments the risk has changed based on a moderate increase in the likelihood of entry and exposure of HPAI with a significant increase in the projected consequence of HPAI incursions, due to the expected scale of impacts on wild bird populations. Risks to non-human mammals have not been explicitly considered in previous Australian risk assessments.
- The department agrees that the risk has increased since previous risk assessments (which concluded that the risk was low) and is working with stakeholders to raise awareness and identify and address any gaps in response preparedness.

2. The risk assessment is provided as Attachment A.
3. The Australian Government is coordinating across multiple government and non-government organisations to improve awareness and preparedness for a potential incursion of HPAI. This includes:
    - Providing the risk assessment to key government agencies and committees that have a role in biosecurity responses and preparedness planning, including the Animal Health Committee and the Environment and Invasives Committee.
    - Working with state and territory governments to determine appropriate governance and coordination mechanisms for a cross-sectoral emergency response. Note there are existing arrangements for both the animal health and environmental biosecurity sectors, either of which may be used in the event of an HPAI outbreak in wild birds.
    - Working with state and territory governments to adjust surveillance to increase the likelihood of early detection of an incursion of HPAI. Note that state and territory governments are responsible for disease surveillance and control within their borders.
    - Increasing surveillance and awareness of HPAI in northern Australia through the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) program.
    - Considering potential impacts of HPAI on Australia's unique fauna, and any additional preparedness and response arrangements that might be warranted, focused on areas of responsibility such as Australian Government-managed or jointly managed areas.
    - Working with poultry industries to advise them of the risk and improve preparedness.
    - Supporting Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) to deliver awareness materials and risk management guidance relevant to wildlife managers and increase surveillance in shorebirds.
    - Ensuring awareness within the public health sector, by briefing key public health committees such as the Communicable Disease Network Australia. Given the low number of confirmed human cases globally caused by clade 2.3.4.4b, the public health sector is not actively involved in preparedness

activities at the current time. This will be regularly reassessed, and engagement increased if warranted.

- Preparing national talking points and communication materials for different audiences and revising information on the department's website.
- Using existing bilateral relationships to learn from the experiences of countries that have experienced outbreaks of the new HPAI clade.

4. AUSVETPLAN is the nationally agreed policy for responding to emergency animal disease outbreaks, including avian influenza. The avian influenza response strategy would inform development of an incident specific emergency animal disease response plan.

   Guidance on management of disease in wildlife is available from WHA, including the National Guidelines for Management of Disease in Free-ranging Australian Wildlife, and the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and Wild Animals in Australia: A Risk Mitigation Toolbox For Wildlife Managers to assist them to assess and mitigate risks of HPAI at the local level.

5. The steps in confirming an outbreak of an emergency animal disease such as HPAI and initiating an emergency response are summarised in a flow diagram available on the Animal Health Australia website. In brief, once laboratory testing at the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness has confirmed HPAI, the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases is convened and the affected jurisdiction prepares a response plan for consideration by the committee. In the event that environmental biosecurity arrangements were considered most appropriate, the National Biosecurity Management Consultative Committee would be convened but the process would be similar.

   International notifications to the World Organisation for Animal Health would also be made in line with Australia's obligations.

6. There has been targeted engagement with Indigenous ranger groups via the NAQS program, including:

   - fact sheets
   - digital posters for the Torres Strait
   - virtual presentation delivered by the NAQS Animal Health Technical Manager on 22 June 2023
   - face-to-face mini workshop delivered on avian influenza and PPE required for sampling in October 2023
   - delivery of an Avian influenza at Biosecurity fundamentals workshop in collaboration with WHA in the Northern Territory in late November 2023
   - engagement of 10 ranger groups to collect monthly samples to contribute to avian influenza surveillance, although some training is pending before sample collection commences
   - animation tailored for indigenous communities and rest of northern Australia about avian influenza – first draft animation completed and sound editing currently occurring which is expected to be delivered by the end of November 2023.

There have also been early discussions between the department and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) about sharing resources and training opportunities for Traditional Owners and Indigenous ranger groups that work with DCCEEW.

WHA has held several meetings on HPAI with state and territory environment agency representatives to raise awareness and develop an understanding of the support they require to manage risk. This has informed the development of the risk mitigation toolbox.

7. We are in the very early stages of understanding the distribution of risk within Australia, and further work is required. WHA has developed the risk mitigation toolbox using funding from the Australian government. The toolbox is a guidance document for managers of wild animal populations in Australia so they can prevent and prepare for an outbreak of HPAI, targeted to managers of wild animal populations in Australia, including national and state environmental and biosecurity agencies, local governments, and private landholders, provides strategies for HPAI in wild birds as well as other wild animal species, to support them to develop HPAI risk mitigation plans for their site and the populations that they manage.
8. Communications to date have been targeted to stakeholders most likely to be involved in surveillance or response to HPAI. This includes state and territory government animal health and environment agencies, wildlife veterinarians, non-government organisations such as Birdlife Australia and individual researchers and ecologists who work with susceptible species. Some information for the general public has been published by WHA and further public communications are under development. Information resources developed by WHA are available on their website.
9. There is no national research plan for HPAI.
10. There are many considerations required prior to making decisions about vaccinating threatened species, including whether the vaccines proposed for use are safe and effective in the species to be vaccinated. We anticipate guidelines on vaccination of wildlife from the World Organisation for Animal Health will be released soon and these are likely to inform Australia's position. In the meantime, appropriate biosecurity practices form the best protection for captive populations of threatened species, as they are for poultry. Currently, there is no supply arrangement for avian influenza vaccines.
11. Different funding arrangements are used for responding to an outbreak of an emergency animal disease in Australia, compared with assisting another country to manage a disease outbreak. The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement and the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement provide agreed mechanisms for rapid provision of funding for emergency responses that fit within the scope of one of the agreements. In the event that neither agreement was applicable, other funding mechanisms would be explored.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Back Pocket Brief

Animal Health Policy Branch

Brief current as at 25 January 2024

BPB08 HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)

CURRENT ISSUE

- A new strain of H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) virus, clade 2.3.4.4b, is causing widespread disease outbreaks and deaths of large numbers of poultry and wild birds in many overseas countries. Spillover infections in mammals and sporadic human infections have been reported.
- Australia and Antarctica are currently free of this strain of virus.
    - However, it was recently detected on sub-Antarctic islands (South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands) over the 2023-24 southern hemisphere summer. These are the first known cases in the Antarctic region and an indication that introduction to the Antarctic continent may occur.

KEY POINTS

- Australia is currently free from HPAI.
- The risk of HPAI viruses entering Australia via migratory birds had historically been considered low.
- In 2022 the Australian Government commissioned Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) to undertake a risk assessment that indicated the risk of exotic H5 HPAI viruses entering Australia through migratory wild birds has increased.
- Expanded sampling of shore birds and sea birds in 2022 and 2023 has not detected HPAI viruses to date*.
- There are no feasible controls available to reduce the likelihood of introduction of HPAI into Australia via wild bird movements.

Preparedness activities to manage the risks of HPAI

- In response to the WHA risk assessment, Biosecurity Animal Division, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer are working with WHA and other stakeholders to raise awareness and identify and address gaps in response preparedness. This includes:

Contact Officer: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Mobile Number: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

SES Lead: Brant Smith
Mobile Number: s. 47F(1)

  - Adopting a national approach and working to ensure cross-sectoral governance and funding arrangements are in place in the event of an incursion affecting wildlife.
  - Ensuring animal health surveillance provides the opportunity for early detection of any incursion to Australia.
  - Developing communication materials including talking points, a social media campaign and revised website content that can be used by animal, human and environmental sectors to raise awareness and encourage stakeholders to act.

- Activities that encourage good on-farm biosecurity and early detection, preparedness and resilience (including business continuity planning) contribute to management of the risk of HPAI. The department continues to advocate for and support these activities.
- The Australian animal health laboratory network has the diagnostic capability to detect and characterise avian influenza viruses.
- The department funds the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program which is managed by WHA. Thousands of wild bird samples have been screened with no HPAI viruses detected to date.
- The department has funded WHA to deliver the One Health Surveillance Initiative, an $8.4 million program over 4 years from 2021-22. This includes a One Health Investigation Fund, which has supported HPAI preparedness activities for wildlife including:
  - Funding of additional wild shorebird surveillance based on the risk assessment.
  - Reviewing and updating HPAI public information documents.
  - Developing a risk mitigation toolbox for wildlife managers to assist with assessing and mitigating the risks of HPAI.
- The National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network (NBCEN) has developed public communication resources that can be deployed in the event of a HPAI outbreak.
  - These resources include a Crisis Communication Playbook, to supplement the Biosecurity Incident Public Information Manual, and national talking points.
- There is ongoing consultation between the department and other Australian Government agencies including the Department of Health and Aged Care, the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to identify the roles of each agency and develop a coordinated response in the event of a HPAI incursion.

- The department has begun discussions with the National Emergency Management Agency to secure mission-critical supplies for responding to an outbreak.

What arrangements are in place to respond to an outbreak?

- The AUSVETPLAN Avian Influenza Response Strategy is the nationally agreed approach for the response to an incident of avian influenza in poultry, aviary or zoo birds in Australia. It underwent a minor review (format, amendments due to changes in international standards) in October 2022, and is now undergoing a full review in light of the current global situation.H5 HPAI is a category 2 disease under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, which facilitates a quick and effective response while minimising uncertainty over management and funding arrangements.

Would we use vaccination?

- Australia's default policy for an outbreak of HPAI is to contain and eradicate the disease in the shortest possible time, without vaccination.
- However, vaccination may be considered in circumstances where an outbreak is likely to spread; has become widespread; to protect captive rare, endangered, and valuable birds; and when there is high risk of spillover from wild birds.
- The decision to use vaccination rests with the National Management Group, after considering technical advice from the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD).
- This would depend on an effective vaccine becoming available. The department holds an import permit for a commercially available inactivated H5N2 vaccine.
- The WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code now states that vaccination does not affect the HPAI status of a free country, from a trade perspective, if an appropriate surveillance system is in place that supports the absence of HPAI infection in poultry.

Potential impacts of HPAI on trade

- Zoning (implementing controls to geographically define disease-free populations of animals) has previously been used to manage Australia's export market access for poultry products following incursions of avian influenza in Victoria and New South Wales.
    - In 2022, the department entered a pre-emptive zoning arrangement for the export of poultry products to Singapore during a HPAI outbreak.
- According to the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code, a notification of HPAI in wild birds, or low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) in wild birds or poultry does not affect a country's HPAI status for trade purposes.

BACKGROUND

- There have been eight outbreaks of HPAI since 1976, the most recent of which occurred in Victoria in 2020. All outbreaks were successfully eradicated.
- Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by influenza A viruses. These viruses are classified into subtypes based on two surface proteins – haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N).
- Wild birds, especially waterfowl and shorebirds, are considered the main reservoir hosts of avian influenza viruses.
- The transmission of HPAI viruses from birds to humans is rare, and sustained human-to-human transmission has not yet been reported.
- Some of Australia's threatened wildlife may be at risk in the event of an H5 HPAI incursion. The department is working with DCCEEW, and the Threatened Species Office, to understand threats to matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species.
- *Expanded surveillance sampling of shore and sea birds in locations around Australia was initiated in 2022 by Deakin University & University of Melbourne researchers, with assistance from numerous bird conservation organisations. Repeat sampling undertaken in 2023 by the researchers and conservation organisations was funded in part by DAFF's One Health Investigation Fund, which is administered by Wildlife Health Australia. This surveillance complements avian influenza wild bird surveillance occurring through other programs in Australia, including the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program and the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy. To date no HPAI viruses have been detected.
- Apart from introduction via wild birds, illegal (non-regulated) importation of animal and poultry products is a possible pathway for HPAI introduction.
    - Attempts to smuggle hatching eggs of poultry via air freight, postage and passenger pathways have been intercepted at the border.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Back Pocket Brief

Animal Health Policy Branch

Brief current as at 23 January 2024

BPB11 HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI)

CURRENT ISSUE

- A new strain of H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) virus, clade 2.3.4.4b, is causing widespread disease outbreaks in many countries, resulting in extensive deaths of poultry and wild birds, spillover infections in mammals, and sporadic human infections.
- Australia and Antarctica are currently free of this strain of virus. However, it has been detected recently on sub-Antarctic islands (South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands) over the 2023-24 southern hemisphere summer. These are the first known cases in the Antarctic region and an indication that introduction to the Antarctic continent may occur. The department is preparing accordingly.

KEY POINTS

- Australia is currently free from HPAI.
- A recent risk assessment by Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) indicated that the risk of exotic H5 HPAI viruses entering Australia through migratory wild birds has increased.
- There are no feasible controls available to reduce the likelihood of introduction of HPAI into Australia via wild bird movements.

How are we preparing?

- In response to the risk assessment, Biosecurity Animal Division, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer are working with WHA and other stakeholders to raise awareness and identify and address gaps in response preparedness. This includes:
    - Adopting a whole of Australian governments approach by briefing key committees including the Animal Health Committee (AHC), Environment and Invasives Committee and Communicable Diseases Network Australia, because of the risks to animal, human and ecosystem health. This includes clarifying cross-sectoral governance and funding arrangements in the event of an incursion affecting wildlife.
    - Working with AHC to ensure animal health surveillance provides the greatest possible opportunity for early detection of any incursion to Australia.

Contact Officer: TBC
Mobile Number:

SES Lead: Brant Smith
Mobile Number: s. 47F(1)

  - Developing talking points, a social media campaign and revised website content that can be used across animal, human and environmental sectors to raise awareness and encourage stakeholders to act.

- Routine disease surveillance in Australia's commercial poultry flocks is effective for the early detection of HPAI and is used to demonstrate ongoing freedom.

- The Australian animal health laboratory network has the diagnostic capability to detect and characterise avian influenza viruses. This was demonstrated by Exercise Waterhole, which used HPAI as a disease scenario, in November 2023*. [Refer to Exercise Waterhole brief for further detail].*

- The department funds the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program which is managed by WHA. The program involves collection of samples from wild birds for avian influenza viruses and monitoring of the evolution of local low pathogenicity strains.

- The department has funded WHA to deliver the One Health Surveillance Initiative, an $8.4 million program over 4 years from 2021-22. This includes a One Health Investigation Fund, which has supported HPAI preparedness activities for wildlife including:

  - Funding of additional wild shorebird surveillance

  - Reviewing and updating HPAI public information documents

  - Developing a risk mitigation toolbox for wildlife managers to assist with assessing and mitigating risks of HPAI.

- The National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network (NBCEN) has developed a suite of public communication resources that can be deployed in the event of a HPAI outbreak.

  - These resources include a Crisis Communication Playbook, to supplement the Biosecurity Incident Public Information Manual, and national talking points.

- There is ongoing consultation between the department and other Australian Government agencies including the Department of Health and Aged Care, the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to identify the roles of each agency and develop a coordinated response in the event of a HPAI incursion.

- The department has commenced discussions with the National Emergency Management Agency to secure mission-critical supplies for an outbreak through the National Emergency Management Stockpile and Standing Offer Panel.

What are the potential impacts of an incursion?

- It is anticipated that an outbreak of H5 HPAI clade 2.3.4.4b will have significant impacts on the Australian poultry industries, native wildlife, the environment, and community wellbeing.
    - The costs of an outbreak would depend on the circumstances but may be significant due to the expected large mortality events in wild birds, wild mammals, and potential for repeated spillover to commercial poultry.

What arrangements are in place to respond to an outbreak?

- The AUSVETPLAN Response Strategy Avian Influenza is the nationally agreed approach for the response to an incident, or suspected incident, of avian influenza in poultry, aviary or zoo birds in Australia. It was last updated in October 2022, and is under major review.
    - Animal Health Australia is the custodian of this document and is managing the review process.
    - The sections on vaccination and movement controls will be updated in consideration of key lessons from the 2020 Victorian avian influenza outbreak, and the overseas response to the current HPAI strain.
- Zoning (implementing controls to geographically define disease-free populations of animals) has previously been used to re-instate Australia's export market access for poultry products following past outbreaks of avian influenza in Victoria and New South Wales.
    - In 2022, the department entered a pre-emptive zoning arrangement for the export of poultry products to Singapore during a HPAI outbreak.

Can we use vaccination?

- Australia's default policy for an outbreak of HPAI in poultry, or in caged or zoo birds, is to contain and eradicate the disease in the shortest possible time, without vaccination.
- However, vaccination may be considered in circumstances where an outbreak is likely to spread; has become widespread; to protect captive rare, endangered, and valuable birds; and when there is high risk of spillover from wild birds.
- Vaccination of free-ranging wildlife is not currently being considered, but further guidance from the World Animal Health Organisation (WOAH) on vaccination of wildlife is expected soon. There has been growing international interest in the use of vaccines for HPAI.
- In 2021, WOAH updated the international standards for HPAI to better support the use of vaccination. The WOAH Terrestrial Code now states that vaccination does not

affect the HPAI status of a free country, from a trade perspective, if an appropriate surveillance system is in place that supports the absence of HPAI infection in poultry.

- HPAI was the theme of the 90th WOAH General Session in May 2023. A resolution was adopted which included recommendations around vaccination, including that Members recognise compliant use of vaccination without negative consequences on trade, when supported by effective monitoring and surveillance.
- The AHC Destruction, Disposal and Decontamination (3D) Working Group conducted a national stocktake for poultry destruction, looking at available equipment, personnel, and critical points in supply chains.
- The department is working with state and territory governments to secure mission-critical supplies, such as carbon dioxide, for the humane culling of poultry in an outbreak.

BACKGROUND

- There have been eight outbreaks of HPAI since 1976, the most recent of which occurred in Victoria in 2020. All outbreaks were successfully and rapidly eradicated.
- Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by influenza A viruses. These viruses are classified into subtypes based on two surface proteins – haemagglutinin (H) and neuraminidase (N).
- Avian influenza viruses are also classified by their ability to cause illness and death in young chickens or by their possession of certain genetic features associated with high virulence.
    - HPAI viruses have a mortality rate of close to 100% in chickens and turkeys. To date, HPAI has only been caused by the H5 and H7 virus subtypes.
    - Low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses generally cause asymptomatic or mild infections but H5 and H7 LPAI viruses can spontaneously mutate to become HPAI viruses.
- Wild birds, especially waterfowl and shorebirds, are considered the main reservoir hosts of avian influenza viruses.
- The transmission of HPAI viruses from birds to humans is rare, and sustained human-to-human transmission has not yet been reported.
- Some of Australia’s threatened wildlife may be at significant risk in the event of an exotic H5 HPAI incursion. The department is working with DCCEEW, including the Threatened Species Office, to understand and mitigate threats to matters of national environmental significance such as threatened species.

- Illegal (non-regulated) importation of animal and poultry products is a possible pathway for disease introduction. Attempts to smuggle hatching eggs of poultry via air freight, postage and passenger pathways have been detected at the border.
- Changes to the WOAH Terrestrial Animal Health Code mean that detections of H5 or H7 LPAI in any poultry, and HPAI in backyard poultry do not require immediate notification to WOAH and a notification of LPAI in wild birds or poultry does not affect a country's HPAI status.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Meeting brief

Invasive Species Council –Jack Gough and Carol Booth

Australian Marine Conservation Society - Alexia Wellbelove

Biodiversity Council - Jaana Dielenberg and James Trezise

Date: 30 July 2024

Time: 09:00 – 10:00

Location: Virtual

Departmental contact officer: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Meeting purpose

- A proposed agenda is at **Attachment A**.
- The Invasive Species Council (ISC), Australian Marine Conservation Society, and Biodiversity Council have sought an initial meeting and briefing on preparedness for HPAI H5 in native wildlife. Information about each organisation is at **Attachment B**.
- Collectively these organisations have raised concerns around the sufficiency and timeliness of preparedness activities underway for a potential incursion of HPAI H5. This includes the need for a national wildlife preparedness taskforce of wildlife experts and major stakeholders, increasing the political priority for HPAI H5 preparedness, vaccination for wildlife, funding being committed to preparedness, and increasing stakeholder engagement. ISC are seeking to work with governments in an ongoing collaborative way to plan, prepare, coordinate and report.

Item 1: Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and apologies

- I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, which for those of us in Canberra is the Ngunnawal people, and also recognise any other people with connection to the lands of the ACT. I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

Item 2: Update on HPAI preparedness activities for wildlife

- Beth to provide an update on the work underway by DAFF, DCCEEW and DoHAC.
- Talking points are at **Attachment C**.
- These talking points present a unified approach by government to HPAI preparedness in wildlife, and have had input from across DAFF and DCCEEW.

- Hand over to Fiona Fraser, DCCEEW, to provide some bespoke additional points. These may include: The work being done by Parks Division and Australian Antarctic Division to prepare for HPAI H5.

Item 3: Update from Wildlife Health Australia

- Hand over to Tiggy Grillo from Wildlife Health Australia to provide an update on the preparedness work they've been doing for HPAI in wildlife.

Item 4: Update and discussion from ISC, AMCS, and BC

- Opportunity for ISC, AMCS, and BC to lead discussion and outline concerns including their recent 12 recommended improvements to preparation for h5 bird flu strain in native wildlife'
- A draft response to ISCs 12 recommended improvements is at **Attachment D** (document is for internal use only and not for sharing to guide discussion).

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

Item 5: Opportunities for collaboration, Actions, and Next Meeting

Discuss opportunities for greater collaboration. Some suggestions below:

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

- Provide NGOs the opportunity to be involved in the National HPAI simulation exercise noting this is a national priority for 2024 but currently in the planning stage and specific details will be provided when possible.
- We could suggest running a HPAI webinar, similar to the recent RIFA webinar, to keep stakeholders of ISC, AMCS and BC informed of what's happening, noting WHA sends out regular updates and videos – this is about stakeholder understanding and separate to a NCM type mechanism.
- Note that a more detailed response to the ISC's 12 recommended improvements to enhance preparedness will be provided in due course.

Summarise actions from today's meeting and set a date for the next meeting

Sensitivities

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

[1] Wildlife Health Australia (2023) HPAI incursion risk assessment for Australia: Abridged Version. Available at https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Resource-Centre/Biosecurity-Management?t=3

Attachments

Attachment A: Agenda

Attachment B: Short biographies

Attachment C: HPAI TPs Wildlife July 2024

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

Attachment A

HPAI H5 preparedness in wildlife meeting agenda

Date Tuesday 30 July 2024
Time 09:00 – 10:00 AEST
Chair Beth Cookson
Location Online

Participant	Organisation
Beth Cookson	Commonwealth (DAFF)
Rupert Wood	Wildlife Health Australia
Tiggy Grillo	Wildlife Health Australia
Jack Gough	Invasive Species Council
Lyall Grieve	Invasive Species Council
Carol Booth	Invasive Species Council
Alexia Wellbelove (likely apology)	Australian Marine Conservation Society
Jaana Dielenberg	Biodiversity Council
James Trezise	Biodiversity Council
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DAFF)
Brant Smith or Luke Osbourne (taskforce)	Commonwealth (DAFF)
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DAFF)
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DCCEEW)
Fiona Fraser	Commonwealth (DCCEEW)
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DCCEEW)
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DCCEEW)
s. 47F(1)	Commonwealth (DOHAC)

Item	Lead	Time
1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and apologies	Beth Cookson	13:00 – 13:05 (5mins)
2. Update on HPAI preparedness activities for wildlife	Beth Cookson and Fiona Fraser	13:05 – 13:25 (20mins)
3. Update from Wildlife Health Australia	Rupert Wood and Tiggy Grillo	13:25 – 13:30 (5mins)
4. Update and discussion on key issues from ISC, AMCS, and BC	ISC, AMCS, and BC	13:30 – 13:45 (15mins)
5. Opportunities for collaboration, Actions, and Next Meeting	Beth Cookson	13:45 – 13:55 (10mins)

Attachment B

Short biographies on NGOs

Invasive Species Council

- Invasive Species Council (ISC) is an environmental non-government organisation. ISC aim to build a strong, collaborative biosecurity system that reduces the threat of invasive species to nature in Australia.

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

Australian Marine Conservation Society

- Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) are an independent charity dedicated to protecting Australia's ocean wildlife.
- AMCS advocate for real, evidence based solutions based on the best available science.

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

Biodiversity Council

- The Biodiversity Council (BC) is an independent expert group promoting evidence-based solutions to Australia's biodiversity crisis.

Attachment C

HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b Talking Points

- Australia is stepping up national preparedness for a potential incursion of HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b (referred to as HPAI H5).
- We are pursuing a lot of HPAI H5 preparedness work for a potential incursion, but we also recognise that more work is needed to be prepared. This is why the government has stood up a HPAI taskforce, which includes members from the agriculture, environment and health departments, to ensure a OneHealth approach.
- National approach
    - The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the Department of Health and Aged Care are working closely to improve Australia's preparedness for HPAI H5.
    - We are taking a national approach to preparedness for HPAI H5 and note it is a one health issue. Activities include, but are not limited to, development of a DAFF, DCCEEW and Health taskforce, National Action Plan; regular cross-sectoral working groups to consider response arrangements under outbreak scenarios; and working with state-territory threatened species managers.
    - We have a roundtable discussion in train to share and understand specific preparedness and response arrangements for imperilled species, ensure collaborative responses, and identify needs and gaps.
    - Several complementary simulation exercises are under consideration to test response capabilities and identify gaps across different outbreak scenarios.
- Surveillance
    - We are ramping up surveillance for wildlife. This is occurring at the national level through several collaborative efforts including, but are not limited to, the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program; the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy; capacity-building and surveillance in partnership with Australia's near neighbours.
    - Indeed, recent investments in surveillance for HPAI includes:
        - $2.2 million for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative
        - $1.1 million to extend the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program for a further 4 years
        - $580,000 to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife
        - $70,000 to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry.

- Response arrangements
    - There are several existing response arrangements which are being investigated for an incursion of HPAI H5 under different outbreak scenarios such as, but not limited to, application of the EADRA and other arrangements. s. 47E(d)

      AHA is also in the process of updating the AUSVETPLAN for Avian Influenza based on the rapidly evolving global situation.

s. 47E(d)

    - We are working with partners to ensure the data and modelling needed to support decision-making for wildlife is national scale, comprehensive across species, and helps to identify species that are highly susceptible to HPAI – and to identify any research needs to support decision making.
    - We are exploring additional opportunities for acute threat abatement and other emergency response actions in the event imperilled populations in situ are HPAI-affected (for example, preventing predation of surviving wild birds by cats and foxes).
- Public awareness
    - We are investing in communication with stakeholders, including industry and the conservation community, as well as the general public to strengthen awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures, and HPAI preparedness and mitigation.
- Vaccinations
    - We are keeping informed of developments in wildlife vaccination trials in the US and New Zealand, and considering options for vaccination of wildlife populations in Australia. There is not currently a vaccine available for use in Australia, so actual vaccination of wildlife will not be possible in the short term.
    - We are considering the effectiveness, feasibility and risks involved in vaccinations for native species in captivity. This includes developing a decision-making framework focused on susceptibility. Trilateral 'lessons learned' briefings with US and NZ, hosted by WHA, have been very valuable.
- HPAI H5 Resources
    - There is accessible guidance available to support preparedness and response planning including but not limited to WHA Risk Mitigation Toolbox, AHA HPAI Response Plan, NAQS Keep a TopWatch! for avian influenza animation.
    - We know the WHA Risk Mitigation Toolbox is being promulgated throughout zoo facilities holding threatened species and is being utilised and adapted to support assessment of the adequacy of their existing – and adjustment of – biosecurity.

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

s. 47C(1),s. 47E(d)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: AMM-AGSOC
Sent: Friday, 12 July 2024 4:58 PM
To: s. 47F(1)
Cc: DLO Watt - Agriculture; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) APD Coordination; Stanion, Joanna; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) AMM-AGSOC
Subject: AMM 02/2024 Chair's briefing pack [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: MB24-000108 Minister brief_for MO.docx; Att A - AMM 02_2024_Agenda.docx; Att B - AMM 02-2024 Attendee list_for MO.docx; Att C - AMM 02_2024 Annotated Agenda - for MO.docx; Att D_AMM 02-2024 Additional briefing material_for MO.docx; Att E AMM 02-2024 Meeting communique_for MO.docx; AMM 02-2024 Papers 5 7a 7b 7c.pdf; AMM 02-2024 Item 7d Actions 7e Workplan updates.xlsx; Att G- Member updates.docx; Att H- AMM 02-2024 Event itinerary_for MO.docx

Dear s. 47F(1) and s. 47F(1)

Chair's briefing pack

Please find attached the AMM 02/2024 briefing pack for Minister Watt to chair the meeting. This suite of documents has been cleared by Secretary Adam Fennessy and we will progress via PDMS MB24-000108 once the South Australian paper is cleared and following any updates required post AMM pre-brief on Tuesday 16 July.

- Ministerial brief attaches the following:
  - Att A - Agenda
  - Att B - Attendee list
  - Att C - Annotated agenda
  - Att D - Additional briefing material
  - Att E – Draft meeting communique
  - Att F – AMM 02/2024 Meeting paper pack
    - PDF contains MO cleared papers as per index of papers below
  - Att G – Members updates
  - Att H – Event itinerary

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Kind regards,
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Director | Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AMM) & Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) Secretariat
T: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| M:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **Secretariat email:** s. 47E(d) **@aff.gov.au**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
Workforce, Engagement and Productivity Branch | Agriculture Policy Division
CQ2 Building, 70 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT 2601
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ATTACHMENT C

AGRICULTURE MINISTERS' MEETING

MINISTER WATT'S ANNOTATED AGENDA

Thursday 18 July 2024

2.00pm to 5.00pm pm (AEST)

In person meeting in Brisbane

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	LEAD	TIME
2	High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza	Discussion	Chair / Dr Beth Cookson CVO	2.40pm - 30 mins

Handling notes and key discussion points:

- You will make opening remarks, noting that the current outbreaks of H7 HPAI are the most significant avian disease incident that Australia has faced, in the scale of response, concurrent strains and the multiple jurisdictions affected.
- You can highlight that the Australian Government is investing in specific activities and coordinating broader national efforts to improve awareness and preparedness for HPAI, including H5 HPAI.
    - A media release published on 10 July 2024 outlines key investments in this space, amounting to nearly $7 million. This investment will enhance our capability to detect and respond to HPAI and promote awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness.
- You will advise members that:
    - Dr Beth Cookson, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer will join online to provide a 10-minute operational update on the current H7 HPAI response and HPAI preparedness activities, including for H5 HPAI.
- When you are ready for Dr Beth Cookson to present, ask the Secretariat to admit her into the meeting via MS Teams.
- Following Beth's update, you and/or the Secretary will provide a high-level overview of related strategic issues, including:
    - impacts on production sectors and domestic supply chains
    - disruptions to international trade
    - the increasing number, complexity and cost of biosecurity responses, and the importance of considering these issues and our framework to respond as we engage in the independent review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity. This review will make recommendations on these issues to AMM in January 2025
    - the importance of strengthening collaboration with Environment Ministers and their departments on HPAI implications for biosecurity environment threats and issues, to ensure we have a holistic approach to our preparedness for H5 HPAI, noting wild birds are the likely source of transmission and the likely significant impacts of the virus to our environment.

- You will summarise the discussion, note agreed actions, thank Beth for her update.
- Additional briefing is provided at **Attachment D**.

Sensitivities

HPAI

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Environmental non-government organisations are concerned the effects of the international HPAI H5N1 strain could have a significant impact on Australian native wildlife and have raised in the media the need to improve our coordinated response arrangements for wildlife.

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ATTACHMENT D

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ITEM	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	LEAD	TIME
2	High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza	Discussion	Chair / Dr Beth Cookson CVO	2.40pm - 30 mins

AGENDA ITEM 2: HPAI

Lead: Commonwealth

Key points:

- The current outbreaks of H7 HPAI are the most significant avian disease incident that Australia has faced, in the scale of response, concurrent strains and the multiple jurisdictions affected. It will be important to understand the required actions for the coming months, as well as the key risks and sensitivities.
- Due to the dynamic nature of the current H7 HPAI outbreaks, an update on the current situation will be provided by Dr Beth Cookson in the meeting. Dr Cookson will also discuss national HPAI preparedness activities, including for H5 HPAI.
- The national arrangements continue to prove effective in containing and eradicating the current H7 HPAI outbreaks. Since 1976, 8 previous outbreaks of H7 HPAI have been successfully contained and eradicated.
- The efforts of the combatant jurisdictions and the support of all parties to the cost-shared responses under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement are recognised.
- These outbreaks have highlighted the need for a continued focus on Australia's preparedness and response capability for HPAI.

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- As HPAI cuts across both the environment and agriculture portfolios, it will be important that jurisdictional Agriculture Ministers work closely with their environment counterparts on this issue. It is also a matter of interest for the health portfolio, with regular engagement already occurring between the Chief Veterinary Officer and Chief Medical Officer and their offices.

Background:

- On 24 May 2024, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) activated a Response Coordination Group to enhance the strategic coordination of departmental capabilities in support of the eradication programs under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. An Incident Management Team (IMT) was also activated to centralise national level contingency planning, including identifying courses of action to support the jurisdictional responses with mission critical supplies, anticipating supply chain

impacts / cost of living pressures, and identifying options for enhanced support from the Australian Government to industry and affected communities.

- A dedicated taskforce has been established in DAFF to drive this work and key actions arising from the IMT.
- On 5 July 2024, you were briefed on national HPAI preparedness activities and funding allocated for key activities in this space (MS24-000360).

Response costs for events of this significance

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Collaboration between environment and agriculture portfolios

- Senior level discussions and collaboration is occurring between DAFF and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to improve awareness and preparedness for a potential incursion in wildlife, including options to help protect endangered wildlife.
- In addition, members of the National Biosecurity Committee's Environment and Invasives Committee and Animal Health Committee have formed a joint working group to consider cross sectoral preparedness and response arrangements for potential outbreak scenarios including in native birds and other wildlife.

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Sensitivities

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Environmental non-government organisations are concerned the effects of the international HPAI H5N1 strain could have a significant impact on Australian native wildlife and have raised in the media the need to improve our coordinated response arrangements for wildlife.

Contact:

Brant Smith, First Assistant Secretary, Biosecurity Animal Division | s. 47F(1)

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Agriculture Ministers' Meeting

Meeting Communiqué

Thursday 18 July 2024

Commonwealth, state, and territory agriculture ministers met in person on Thursday 18 July 2024, for the second Agriculture Ministers' Meeting (AMM) of the year.

AMM 02/2024 was chaired by the Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt. Minister Watt welcomed the new AMM Member for Tasmania, the Hon Jane Howlett, and thanked the Hon Jo Palmer MLC for her contribution to AMM during her time as Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries and Water.

Biosecurity

Australian high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks

Ministers recognised that the current outbreaks of H7 HPAI are the most significant avian disease incident that Australia has faced and highlighted the continued national response effort across the Commonwealth, affected jurisdictions and industry. Ministers discussed the challenges around response costs for events of this significance, impacts to production sectors and domestic supply chains as well as international trade. Ministers also highlighted the need for continued investment and focus on Australia's preparedness and response capability for HPAI, including in wildlife noting the evolving threat of H5 HPAI.

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: AMM-AGSOC
Sent: Wednesday, 17 July 2024 3:08 PM
To: s. 47F(1)
Cc: DLO Watt - Agriculture; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) APD Coordination; Stanion, Joanna; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Lowe, Matt; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) s. 22(1)(a)(ii) AMM-AGSOC
Subject: RE: AMM 02/2024 Chair's briefing pack [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Attachments: AMM 02-2024 Draft meeting communique_circulated to members 17 July.docx; AMM Members update submissions - Minister Scriven.docx; Att C - AMM 02_2024 Annotated Agenda - for MO - updated 17 July.docx; Item 1 - Graphs of Working Holiday Maker and PALM.pptx; AMM 02-2024 Event itinerary - updated 16 July.docx

Hi s. 47F(1) and s. 47F(1)

Please find attached and referenced below the changes to the AMM 02/2024 briefing pack:

- Att C: Annotated agenda

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

  - Item 2 – HPAI - Page 7 & 8
    - Updated reference for Minister Watt to defer to either Adam Fennessy or Justine Saunders following Beth's update

s. 47C(1)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Many thanks,
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Director | Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AMM) & Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) Secretariat
T: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| M:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| Secretariat email:** s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
Workforce, Engagement and Productivity Branch | Agriculture Policy Division
CQ2 Building, 70 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT 2601
agriculture.gov.au

From: s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, July 16, 2024 1:25 PM
To: s. 47F(1) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47F(1) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>; Stanion, Joanna <Joanna.Stanion@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>; Lowe, Matt <Matt.Lowe@aff.gov.au>; Hill-

Stein, Fiona <Fiona.Hill-Stein@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: RE: AMM 02/2024 Chair's briefing pack [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi s. 47F(1) and s. 47F(1),

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

I will update the pack along with any other changes requested at the 4pm pre-brief and send an updated pack to you ahead of the meeting.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Thanks
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Director | Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AMM) & Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) Secretariat
T: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| M:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| Secretariat email:** s. 47E(d) **@aff.gov.au**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
Workforce, Engagement and Productivity Branch | Agriculture Policy Division
CQ2 Building, 70 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT 2601
agriculture.gov.au

From: s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, July 12, 2024 4:58 PM
To: s. 47F(1) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47F(1) @aff.gov.au>
Cc: DLO Watt - Agriculture <dlo.watt@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>; Stanion, Joanna <Joanna.Stanion@aff.gov.au>; s. 22(1)(a)(ii) @aff.gov.au>; s. 47E(d) @aff.gov.au>
Subject: AMM 02/2024 Chair's briefing pack [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear s. 47F(1) and s. 47F(1),

Chair's briefing pack

Please find attached the AMM 02/2024 briefing pack for Minister Watt to chair the meeting. This suite of documents has been cleared by Secretary Adam Fennessy and we will progress via PDMS MB24-000108 once the South Australian paper is cleared and following any updates required post AMM pre-brief on Tuesday 16 July.

- Ministerial brief attaches the following:
  - Att A - Agenda
  - Att B - Attendee list
  - Att C - Annotated agenda
  - Att D - Additional briefing material
  - Att E – Draft meeting communique
  - Att F – AMM 02/2024 Meeting paper pack
    - PDF contains MO cleared papers as per index of papers below
  - Att G – Members updates
  - Att H – Event itinerary

Index of papers		
Agenda item	**Paper title**	
5	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	
6		
7		
	e. AMM – AGSOC Workplan Updates	

Kind regards,
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Director | Agriculture Ministers Meeting (AMM) & Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) Secretariat
T: s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **M:** s. 22(1)(a)(ii) **| Secretariat email:** s. 47E(d) **@aff.gov.au**

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry
Workforce, Engagement and Productivity Branch | Agriculture Policy Division
CQ2 Building, 70 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra ACT 2601
agriculture.gov.au

ATTACHMENT C

AGRICULTURE MINISTERS' MEETING

MINISTER WATT'S ANNOTATED AGENDA

Thursday 18 July 2024

2.00pm to 5.00pm pm (AEST)

In person meeting in Brisbane

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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ITEM	DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	LEAD	TIME
2	High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza	Discussion	Chair / Dr Beth Cookson CVO	2.40pm - 30 mins

Handling notes and key discussion points:

- You will make opening remarks, noting that the current outbreaks of H7 HPAI are the most significant avian disease incident that Australia has faced, in the scale of response, concurrent strains and the multiple jurisdictions affected.
- You can highlight that the Australian Government is investing in specific activities and coordinating broader national efforts to improve awareness and preparedness for HPAI, including H5 HPAI.
    - A media release published on 10 July 2024 outlines key investments in this space, amounting to nearly $7 million. This investment will enhance our capability to detect and respond to HPAI and promote awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness.
- You will advise members that:
    - Dr Beth Cookson, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer will join online to provide a 10-minute operational update on the current H7 HPAI response and HPAI preparedness activities, including for H5 HPAI.
- When you are ready for Dr Beth Cookson to present, ask the Secretariat to admit her into the meeting via MS Teams.
- Following Beth's update, the Secretary and/or Justine Saunders (DAFF) will provide a high-level overview of related strategic issues, including:
    - impacts on production sectors and domestic supply chains
    - disruptions to international trade

s. 47C(1)

    - the importance of strengthening collaboration with Environment Ministers and their departments on HPAI implications for biosecurity environment threats and issues, to ensure we have a holistic approach to our preparedness for H5 HPAI, noting wild birds are the likely source of transmission and the likely significant impacts of the virus to our environment.

- You will summarise the discussion, note agreed actions, thank Beth for her update.
- Additional briefing is provided at **Attachment D**.

Sensitivities

HPAI

s. 47C(1)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Environmental non-government organisations are concerned the effects of the international HPAI H5N1 strain could have a significant impact on Australian native wildlife and have raised in the media the need to improve our coordinated response arrangements for wildlife.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Division: Biosecurity Animal Division

BAD03

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA

CAVEAT – THIS KIB WILL NEED TO BE UPDATED AS THE SITUATION IN EVOLVES

CURRENT ISSUE

Australian outbreak

- The Australian Government is supporting affected jurisdictions and the poultry industry to eradicate avian influenza and ensure domestic and international trade impacts are minimised.
- The outbreaks in Australia are caused by H7 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) viruses. These viruses are not the same as the H5 HPAI viruses that have caused the deaths of poultry, wild birds, and wild mammals overseas.
- On 22 May 2024, the Victorian Government confirmed an outbreak of HPAI on a poultry farm near Meredith in the Golden Plains Shire.
  - There are now 8 poultry farms in Victoria affected.
  - 7 poultry farms are located in the Golden Plains Shire and are caused by a strain of HPAI H7N3. 1 poultry farm is located near Terang and is caused by a strain of HPAI H7N9.
  - The virus that caused the 2020 HPAI outbreak in the Golden Plains Shire, Victoria was a strain of HPAI H7N7.
- On 19 June 2024, New South Wales (NSW) confirmed an outbreak of HPAI on a poultry egg farm in the Hawkesbury; north-west of Sydney.
  - NSW is responding to HPAI H7N8 outbreaks on 2 commercial poultry farms in the Greater Sydney Basin. 4 individual detections have also occurred on non-commercial properties within the restricted emergency zone close to the original detection.
- On 27 June 2024, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government confirmed an outbreak of HPAI at a commercial egg farm.

Contact Officer: Luke Osborne
Telephone: s. 47F(1)
Last updated: 12 July 2024

SES Lead: Brant Smith
Mobile Number: s. 47F(1)
EC24-000420

- The strain causing this outbreak is the same as confirmed in NSW and tracing activities have established a connection between this premises and the outbreak in the Hawkesbury.
- HPAI N7N8 has been confirmed on 1 poultry farm and 1 non-commercial premises (backyard chickens) within the quarantine area in the ACT.

HPAI Preparedness

- Since 2020, H5 HPAI has caused significant deaths of poultry, wild birds, and wild mammals overseas. Sporadic human infections have been reported. In March 2024, this strain was reported in dairy cattle and goats for the first time globally in the United States of America (US).
- H5 HPAI viruses have never been detected in wild birds, poultry or livestock in Australia.
- The Australian Government is investing in specific activities and coordinating broader national efforts to improve awareness and preparedness for HPAI, including H5 HPAI.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

Australian outbreak

- Since 1976 and prior to the current H7 HPAI outbreaks, there have been 8 previous outbreaks of HPAI in commercial poultry in Australia. These were all quickly and successfully eradicated with minimal spread among poultry farms.
- Australia has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza outbreaks. This includes having established cost-sharing arrangements and relevant AUSVETPLAN response strategies.
- The Australian Government is supporting affected jurisdictions in their response to the HPAI outbreak. Affected industries are also involved when an outbreak occurs and have a role in the decision-making processes during the response.
- Emergency Animal Disease Response Plans proposing to eradicate the HPAI outbreaks in affected jurisdictions have been reviewed and endorsed by the National Management Group. This means the response effort that is underway will be eligible for cost sharing under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).
- The HPAI detections are a low risk to public health as the virus rarely affects humans unless there is direct and close contact with sick birds.
- Eggs and poultry meat are safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked according to standard food handling practices.

Trade Impacts

- Emergency animal disease outbreaks like HPAI have impacts on trade.
  - Many countries experiencing outbreaks of HPAI, including Australia, can expect impacts on trade and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is working to minimise these.
- The department has notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of the H7 HPAI detections in Victoria, NSW and the ACT, consistent with our international reporting obligations.
- The department has also formally notified trading partners of the detections and provided updates as appropriate.
- In accordance with the department's obligations as the competent authority for export certification for animals and animal products, the department will not issue health certification for exports where importing country requirements for avian influenza cannot be met.
  - For example, the change in Australia's HPAI disease free status can affect a product's ability to meet importing country requirements.
  - For HPAI, this affects the exports of products including avian and ratite (emu) products such as poultry meat and meat products, by-products, eggs and egg products, live birds and some reproductive material.
- In addition, during an emergency animal disease outbreak, such as HPAI, importing countries may seek further information regarding management activities and choose to put additional temporary trade suspensions or restrictions in place.
- The department is and will continue to work with trading partners and industry to minimise trade disruptions where able to do so.

Domestic supply chain impacts

- Approximately 7% of the national layer hen flock has been impacted by the H7 HPAI outbreaks and there is localised disruption to supply that is impacting retail, hospitality and manufacturing sectors. Some supplies are now being re-directed to areas with short supply, including to remote communities.
- There has been no discernible impact on the supply of chicken meat.
- Advice provided by major retailers indicates that on average, consumers purchase 1 ½ cartons of eggs per week. Some retailers such as Coles and Woolworths have imposed purchasing limits to discourage potential panic buying.

- McDonald's has also reduced its breakfast hours and removed some images from visual menus to manage demand.
- These commercial stabilisers have helped to avoid any widespread, acute egg shortages.
- Industry has advised the department that it will take approximately 6-9 months for egg supply to return to normal, in farms that have been depopulated across Victoria, NSW and the ACT.
- Disease outbreaks are dynamic. The department is monitoring the implications for egg supplies and working with the poultry industries and the retail sector.
- As part of this, a National Coordination Mechanism involving key industry groups and governments has been meeting to keep across the retail and egg supply situation. The meeting is co-chaired by the National Emergency Management Agency and the department.
- Industry and retailers have raised concerns and sought further information about the effect of temporary housing orders on free range labelling claims, which are governed by an information standard made under Australian Competition Law.
- The information standard is designed to ensure that farms that produce eggs in cages or barns don't label them as free-range eggs. In the current circumstances, producers are housing flocks for biosecurity reasons.
- The department will continue to engage with industry and the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) to ensure that support is provided as required.
- The reduced supply of eggs is likely to result in some increase in prices in the short term, which could have implications for cost of living pressures and inflation.

Outbreaks overseas

- We are closely monitoring HPAI outbreaks overseas.
  - Since 2020, there have been outbreaks of H5 HPAI in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, South America and Antarctica.
  - Outbreaks overseas have led to extensive losses of poultry, illness and death of wild birds and mammals, particularly marine mammals and mammals that prey or scavenge on birds. In March 2024, H5 HPAI was reported in dairy cattle and goats in the US.
  - H5 HPAI viruses have never been detected in wild birds, poultry or livestock in Australia.

- A small number of human infections with H5 HPAI have been reported globally. Most of these people had close contact with infected birds or dairy cattle and contaminated environments. Current strains of avian influenza do not appear to transmit easily between humans.
- It is believed that wild birds are involved in long-distance spread of H5 HPAI.
- In March 2024, H5 HPAI was reported in cattle for the first time globally in the US. These are the first known natural infections of H5 HPAI in cattle worldwide.
  - The department is receiving updates directly from the US Government and we continue to closely monitor the H5 situation there.
  - The department remains engaged with key industry bodies in sharing information on developments regarding the H5 HPAI situation in the US.
  - The department has assessed that this finding of H5 HPAI in cattle in the US does not increase the risk for livestock in Australia.
  - As of 12 July 2024, it has been reported in dairy herds in 12 states of the US.
  - All dairy products imported from the US are subject to a range of risk management measures, including milk being treated using an approved method of pasteurisation.
- Standard conditions for composite, highly processed, and cooked products which include dairy ingredients (such as chocolate and cakes) will manage the risks of HPAI in goods for human consumption.
- On 16 May 2024, there was a report of H5 HPAI in 4 alpacas. These animals were co-located on a farm in Idaho where HPAI-affected poultry were also depopulated in May 2024.

HPAI Preparedness

- The Australian Government is investing in specific activities and coordinating broader national efforts to improve awareness and preparedness for HPAI, including H5 HPAI.
- On 10 July 2024, Minister Watt published a media release highlighting the $6.9 million investment by the department to enhance our capability to detect and respond to avian influenza and promote awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness. This includes:
  - $2.2 million for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative
  - $1.95 million has been granted to Animal Health Australia to support the national response capability for avian influenza in poultry, including investigating the potential of commercial avian influenza vaccines for use in Australia.

- $1.1 million to extend the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program for a further 4 years
- $800,000 will be invested in communication with stakeholders, industry and the general public to strengthen awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness.
- $580,000 to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife
- $200,000 will be invested in analysis to quantify the location, structure, biosecurity, routine husbandry practices, and movement patterns of Australia's commercial poultry industries.
- $70,000 will be invested in work to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry.

- On 18 April and 1 May 2024, meetings of the National Coordination Mechanism took place to discuss HPAI preparedness.
  - Co-chaired by the department and the National Emergency Management Agency, these meetings included participants from the department, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), the Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Emergency Management Agency, as well as relevant state and territory government agencies as required.
  - The meetings allowed for a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies including the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for a cross-sectoral emergency response. This is in line with the difficulties seen in managing outbreaks of the H5 HPAI in other countries.
- Senior level discussions and collaboration is occurring between DAFF and DCCEEW to improve awareness and preparedness for a potential incursion in wildlife, including options to help protect endangered wildlife. This is in addition to well established and ongoing officer-level collaborations between DAFF and DCCEEW.
- Members of the National Biosecurity Committee's Environment and Invasives Committee and Animal Health Committee have formed a joint working group to consider cross sectoral preparedness and response arrangements for potential outbreak scenarios including in native birds and other wildlife.
- Other activities being undertaken at a national level to improve HPAI preparedness include:

  - considering potential impacts of HPAI on Australia's unique fauna, and any additional preparedness and response arrangements that might be warranted
  - working with poultry industries to improve preparedness
  - supporting Wildlife Health Australia to deliver awareness materials and risk management guidance relevant to wildlife managers and increase surveillance in wild birds
  - briefing key public health committees
  - working with state and territory governments to increase the likelihood of an HPAI event being detected early through surveillance, noting that state and territory governments are responsible for disease surveillance and control within their borders
  - collaborating with countries that have experienced outbreaks of the H5 HPAI to learn from their experiences.

- The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy plays an important role in avian influenza surveillance and stakeholder engagement activities in northern Australia. This includes engaging with First Nations communities and collaborating closely with Indigenous rangers who have extensive and invaluable knowledge and understanding of the health of Australia's ecosystems.
- Animal Health Committee has included HPAI preparedness activities in their 2024-25 workplan following a series of workshops that were conducted in April 2024:
  - Establish agreed response objectives, particularly for scenarios involving wild birds.
  - Revisit Australia's national HPAI vaccination policy and procedures for poultry, wildlife and zoo animals.
  - Evaluate issues relating to implementation of stamping out in poultry.
- On 13 June 2024, Animal Health Australia convened a government-poultry industry roundtable on preparedness activities, with a focus on HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b. This is a further demonstration of the collaborative national approach we take to these threats to our biosecurity status and our vital agricultural sector.
- In August 2024, a National Avian Influenza Summit will be hosted by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, to convene experts in animal health, biosecurity, and agriculture to discuss Australia's readiness and response capabilities in managing an outbreak of H5 HPAI.

- Environmental non-government organisations are concerned the effects of H5 HPAI could be catastrophic on Australian native wildlife and have raised in the media the need to improve planning and response arrangements for wildlife.

Human health risks

- Eggs, poultry and game meat are safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked as per standard food handling practices.
- In Australia there is a very low risk of people becoming infected with avian influenza viruses through normal contact with healthy birds.
- People should avoid direct contact with birds or mammals that are sick or have died unexpectedly and use good hygiene measures for handling and disposing of dead birds or mammals.

BACKGROUND

- The source of Australia's HPAI outbreaks is believed to be low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses introduced via local wild birds, which evolved to HPAI viruses after circulating in poultry.
  - These outbreaks were not caused by H5 HPAI viruses from overseas.
- A risk assessment finalised in June 2023 concluded there is an increased risk of the 2.3.4.4b strain being introduced into Australia by wild birds.
  - There are several factors that contributed to this, such as more species of birds and mammals being infected by this strain in outbreaks overseas.
  - It is also expected that outbreaks of HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b would have more severe impacts on Australia's wildlife and poultry industries than we have seen with previous outbreaks of HPAI in Australia.
  - The report is available on Wildlife Health Australia's website.
- Environmental non-government organisations and the media have raised concerns around the adequacy of this risk assessment given the rapidly evolving situation globally. The department does not believe a further risk assessment is necessary, as it is broadly agreed that the risk is increasing, and the department is investing in Australia's HPAI preparedness accordingly.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

MS24-000360

To: Minister Watt (For Noting)

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS

Timing: 8 July 2024

Recommendations:

1. That you **note** the national high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) preparedness activities that are underway and included in a national preparedness strategy for HPAI in animals (**Attachment A**).

Noted / Please discuss

2. That you **note** the investment that has been made by the Australian Government into key immediate HPAI preparedness activities (**Attachment B**).

Noted / Please discuss

3. That you **note** that additional work being undertaken in response to the H7 HPAI outbreaks in Australia is complementing the national HPAI preparedness activities.

Noted / Please discuss

Minister Watt: **Date:**

Comments:

Clearing Officer:	Justine Saunders APM	Deputy Secretary, Biosecurity and Compliance Group	Ph: 02 6272 4710 Mob: s. 47F(1)
Contact Officer:	Dr Brant Smith	First Assistant Secretary, Biosecurity Animal Division	Mob: s. 47F(1)

Key Points

1. The Commonwealth, affected jurisdictions and industry continue to work together to respond to the current significant outbreaks of H7 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) and prepare for the risk of H5 HPAI. In addition to the options to improve HPAI preparedness provided in May 2024 (**MS24-000168**) the department has developed a national preparedness strategy for HPAI in animals (s. 47C(1)

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2. The six objectives of the strategy are:

    a. Improving Australia's surveillance capacity for early detection of H5 HPAI.

    b. Preventing exposure of poultry to H5 HPAI.

    c. Enhancing H5 HPAI preparedness and clearly define roles and responsibilities between agriculture, environment and health sectors.

    d. Improving capacity and capability to respond to outbreaks of H5 HPAI.

    e. Improving public awareness and communications before and during a response.

    f. International capacity building, engagement and trade.

3. $6.9M is being invested into key immediate HPAI preparedness activities (see **Attachment B** for a breakdown of activities), to bolster the department's national HPAI preparedness strategy – $4.7M in new investment and $2.2M of funding that has been brought forward. This includes:

    - $1.95M to support national response capacity and capability for HPAI in poultry
    - $0.8M to ensure strengthened awareness and understanding of biosecurity measures and preparedness amongst stakeholders, industry and the general public
    - $0.07M to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry
    - $2.78M – $2.2M payment brought forward for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative and provided an additional $0.58M to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife
    - $1.1M to extend the department's support for the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program
    - $0.2M to quantify the location, structure, biosecurity, routine husbandry practices, and movement patterns of Australia's commercial poultry industries.

4. A media release that highlights the key investments that the Australian Government is making into HPAI preparedness is being developed with publication anticipated to occur in the week of 8 July 2024.

Public Sensitivities:

5. The H7 HPAI outbreak response has been well managed by jurisdictions, the Commonwealth and industry despite this remaining a dynamic situation. Observations from this outbreak have further informed the considerable prior planning to guide H5 HPAI preparedness.

Consultation: YES

6. Biosecurity Animal Division, the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer and the Strategy, Performance and Engagement Division were consulted in the development of this minute.

Legal advice / Legislative impacts:

NIL

Financial impacts:

7. $6.9M is being invested into key immediate HPAI preparedness activities (see **Attachment B** for a breakdown of activities).

Farmer/Stakeholder Implications:

8. An outbreak of H5 HPAI in Australia is expected to have far-reaching impacts beyond the poultry industry. People with backyard poultry, aviary and show birds could also be affected.

Opportunities for First Nations people and their communities:

9. First Nations people have a deep spiritual connection to Australia's wildlife. Ensuring that mortality events due to HPAI are reported and appropriately managed will minimise harms to First Nations communities. The National Indigenous Australians Agency has been engaged in the NCM process. s. 47C(1)

Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

s. 47C(1)

11. The department has engaged with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water through a meeting held on 26 June 2024 on HPAI preparedness for wildlife populations, as well as through the Threatened Species Commissioner, Australian Antarctic Division and Parks Australia. Further work is required to identify wildlife species that may be threatened by HPAI and to ensure environment departments are engaged in the emergency response decision making process.

Attachments:

A: National preparedness strategy for HPAI in animals

B: Funding for key immediate HPAI preparedness activities

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

s. 47C(1)

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Attachment B

Funding for key immediate HPAI preparedness activities

$6.9M is being invested into key immediate HPAI preparedness activities to bolster the department's national HPAI preparedness strategy. A breakdown of this funding is provided in the below table.

Funding	Activity Details
$1.95M (GST incl)	The department has granted $1.95M (GST Incl.) to Animal Health Australia to support national response capacity and capability for HPAI in poultry. This work will: • address capability and capacity for humane mass destruction of poultry during outbreak responses • review the availability and application of suitable vaccines for bird species (wild, domestic and zoo birds) • exercise aspects of the AUSVETPLAN response strategy for avian influenza and other relevant documents • provide a forum for engagement between governments and the poultry industries on HPAI preparedness.
$0.8M (GST Incl)	$0.8M will be invested to ensure strengthened awareness and understanding of biosecurity measures and preparedness amongst stakeholders, industry and the general public.
$0.07M (GST Incl)	Over $70,000 (GST Incl.) will be invested in work to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry.
$2.2M (GST Incl)	A $2,200,000 (GST Incl.) payment has been brought forward for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative. This initiative aims to: • enhance Australia's wildlife health surveillance and intelligence program to better protect wildlife and support global and national One Health outcomes • ensure Australia is a credible, active and influential leader and contributor to global One Health reform efforts.
$0.58M (GST Incl)	An additional $580,000 (GST Incl.) has been provided to the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife.
$1.1M (GST Incl)	There is a $1,138,500 (GST Incl.) agreement to extend the department's support for the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program over four years. This will allow national surveillance for influenza viruses in wild birds for better understanding of avian influenza virus genetic variation to support

	industry and human and animal health strategic risk assessment and management.
$0.2M (GST Incl)	$200,000 will be invested in analysis to quantify the location, structure, biosecurity, routine husbandry practices, and movement patterns of Australia's commercial poultry industries. Industry stakeholders, subject matter experts and government authorities will be engaged. This work aims to increase jurisdictional capacity to prepare and respond to future outbreaks.

BIOSECURITY - HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) OUTBREAKS AND PREPAREDNESS

Key facts

- There has been no detection of H7 HPAI in Australia since 10 July, following initial detection in Victoria on 22 May 2024.
- Australian Government efforts on H7 HPAI continue to resume trade for affected commodities and returning to national disease freedom.
- Australia is also prioritising preparedness efforts on H5N1 HPAI, particularly the strain circulating globally (clade 2.3.4.4b).
- Exercise Volare: The Government ran a series of 3 national HPAI preparedness exercises to deliver on a commitment from all Agriculture Ministers in July to convene a national exercise.

TALKING POINTS

Has the global strain of H5N1 HPAI been detected in Australia?

- No, Australia remains the only continent free from the H5N1 HPAI virus strain (clade 2.3.4.4b) causing global concern, noting the recent outbreaks in poultry in Australia are H7 HPAI strains.

What is Australia doing to prepare for a potential H5 HPAI incursion?

- Preparedness for HPAI as an emergency animal disease has been a national focus for many years.

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Responsible Division: Biosecurity Animal Division (BAD) G3
QB24-000047

Date updated: 10 September 2024

- The Australian Government has delivered a series of 3 national HPAI exercises as part of 'Exercise Volare' which simulated a detection of H5N1 HPAI in wildlife in Australia. This involved state and territory governments, and key industry and non-government stakeholders to strengthen Australia's preparedness to inform management of H5N1 HPAI.
- The exercise has been very successful and a great example of collaboration between agriculture, environment, health and emergency management portfolios at the national level, as we take a whole of government and 'One Health' approach to this cross-sectoral threat.
- Exercises such as these are a well-established part of Australia's biosecurity system and outcomes from Exercise Volare will continue to inform governments and stakeholders on future opportunities to further enhance national preparedness and response capability.
- In 2024, the Australian Government also:
  - invested nearly $7 million into further HPAI preparedness (see detail in background)
  - established a dedicated taskforce led by the agriculture, environment, health and emergency management portfolios to ensure a whole-of-government approach to this cross-sectoral disease threat

- activated the National Coordination Mechanism to support national H5 HPAI preparedness activities, ensuring coordinated approach across governments and non-government stakeholders
- andparticipated in a National Avian Influenza Summit hosted by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, convening experts in animal health, biosecurity, and agriculture to discuss Australia's readiness and response capabilities in managing an outbreak of H5N1 HPAI
- attended the Animal Health Australia government-poultry industry roundtable on preparedness activities, with a focus on the HPAI H5N1 strain of global concern.

What did the Australian Government do in response to the recent H7 HPAI outbreaks in Australia?

- The Australian Government led and coordinated animal health policy nationally, including export certification, trade and meeting international reporting obligations.
- Australia also has well practised, nationally agreed procedures, plans and arrangements in place to respond to animal disease incursions. This includes national cost shared responses under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).

- Under the EADRA, state and territory governments have primary responsibility for managing any animal disease outbreak that occurs within their jurisdiction. The Australian Government provides a range of support including specialist personnel and a significant proportion of response costs under the EADRA.
- Eradication responses are significant commitments from these jurisdictions, and I recognise their response efforts. In particular, most recently with ACT, NSW and Victoria responding to the H7 HPAI outbreaks.

What are the impacts on trade and domestic supply?

- HPAI is a trade sensitive disease and Australia has experienced trade impacts.
- Australia continues successful negotiation with several key markets to maintain or restore access for affected commodities and has kept the World Organisation for Animal Health advised of the situation, consistent with our international obligations.
- The Government continues regular contact with industry groups and retailers, including supermarkets, about the impact of HPAI on domestic supply chains **(QB24-000057 refers)**.

Are humans at risk of being infected with avian influenza?

- The Department of Health and Aged Care advises that avian influenza poses a low risk to the public as it rarely affects humans unless there is direct and close contact with sick birds.
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) advises that avian influenza is not a food safety concern, and it is safe to eat properly cooked poultry meat and eggs.
- In Australia there is a very low risk of people becoming infected through normal contact with healthy birds.

BACKGROUND

Eradication response - 2024 H7 HPAI outbreaks

- An estimated 1.8 million birds have been depopulated across Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT to control this outbreak across 8 affected commercial premises in Victoria (7 in the Golden Plains Shire and 1 near Terang), 2 in NSW in the Hawkesbury district and 1 in the ACT at Parkwood.
- A few domestic properties were affected in NSW and the ACT.
- The Victorian and NSW outbreaks likely spilled over from wild birds, noting the 3 strains are closely related to low pathogenicity (LPAI) strains which are present in Australia, whereas ACT outbreak is directly linked to the NSW outbreak, as it was the same strain detected.

Trade impacts - 2024 H7 HPAI outbreaks

- The change in Australia's HPAI free status meant some products no longer met importing country requirements.
- This includes products of avian origin such as poultry (including emu) meat and meat products, by-products, eggs and egg products, live birds and some reproductive material.
- The department continues working with industry and trading partners to negotiate import conditions to facilitate return of trade in poultry and poultry products where possible.
- To date this includes successful negotiations with Singapore, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Zealand, Vanuatu and the United States, which are key markets for affected commodities.

HPAI preparedness investment

- The recent invested $6.9 million in HPAI preparedness included:
    - $2.2 million for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative
    - $1.95 million has been granted to Animal Health Australia to support the national response capability for avian influenza in poultry, including investigating the potential of commercial avian influenza vaccines for use in Australia

- $1.1 million to extend the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program
- $800,000 will be invested in communication with stakeholders, industry and the general public to strengthen awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness
- $580,000 to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife
- $200,000 invested in analysis to quantify the location, structure, biosecurity, routine husbandry practices, and movement patterns of Australia's commercial poultry industries
- $70,000 invested in work to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry.

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BIOSECURITY - H5 HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA (HPAI) PREPAREDNESS

Key facts

- Australia remains the only continent free from H5 HPAI, specifically the H5 strain (clade 2.3.4.4b) which is of concern overseas.
- We have seen this virus spread rapidly between continents so we must be prepared for the possibility that it could arrive in Australia.
- That is why we have a strong focus on leading national preparedness activities and investment.
- We are responding to H7 HPAI outbreaks in Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. The outbreaks are not caused by the H5 HPAI virus circulating internationally (**QB24-000047 refers**).

TALKING POINTS

If asked, has the global strain of H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) been detected in Australia?

- Since 2020, the HPAI virus strain of current global concern (HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b) has spread in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, and Antarctica.

- Australia remains the only continent free from this virus strain.

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QB24-000058
Date updated: 8 August 2024

- The current outbreaks of H7 HPAI in poultry in Australia are not related to the H5 HPAI strain circulating overseas.

If asked, what is Australia doing to prepare for a potential H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) incursion?

- Preparedness for HPAI as an emergency animal disease has been a national focus for many years. This includes through activities such as the department's Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy and the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program.
- We have seen H5 HPAI spread rapidly between continents so we must be prepared for the possibility that it could arrive in Australia. That is why we have a strong focus on leading national preparedness activities.
- We are investing nearly $7 million into HPAI preparedness to enhance our capability to detect and respond to avian influenza and promote awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness. This includes:
    - $580,000 to support early detection and response capability for H5 HPAI in wildlife
    - $2.2 million for the Wildlife Health Australia One Health Surveillance Initiative
    - $1.1 million to extend the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program for a further 4 years

- $70,000 will be invested in work to better understand the link between the presence of H7 low pathogenicity avian influenza in Australian wild birds and the outbreaks of H7 HPAI in Australian poultry.
- $1.95 million has been granted to Animal Health Australia to support the national response capability for avian influenza in poultry, including investigating the potential of commercial avian influenza vaccines for use in Australia
- $800,000 will be invested in communication with stakeholders, industry and the general public to strengthen awareness and understanding of Australia's biosecurity measures and preparedness.
- $200,000 will be invested in analysis to quantify the location, structure, biosecurity, routine husbandry practices, and movement patterns of Australia's commercial poultry industries.

How is the department engaging with other government agencies on H5 HPAI preparedness, to ensure a national approach is taken?

- An Australian Government HPAI Taskforce has been established and is being jointly led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and the Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC). The taskforce is leading and

coordinating national HPAI activity to enhance Australia's preparedness and response capability for HPAI.

- A priority for the taskforce is planning and delivering a series of national H5 HPAI preparedness exercises as agreed recently by all Agricultural Ministers.
- This activity is underway, with the first exercise occurring in August within government agencies as the primary response authorities. There will be opportunity for key industry and non-governments stakeholders to participate in this exercise series as it progresses.
- Over 2024, the National Coordination Mechanism has also been utilised to support our national H5 HPAI preparedness activities to ensure a coordinated approach to this important issue across governments and other bodies, including those representing wildlife health.
- The meetings were co-chaired by the department and the National Emergency Management Agency and included participants from agencies across the government as well as relevant state and territory government agencies and Wildlife Health Australia and Animal Health Australia.
- The meetings allowed for clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies including the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for a cross-sectoral

emergency response. This is in line with the difficulties seen in managing outbreaks of the H5 HPAI virus in other countries.

- Work is ongoing with Wildlife Health Australia, DCCEEW, DHAC, state and territory governments and relevant industry and non-government groups to consider the risk to animal, human and ecosystem health and support preparedness in the poultry and wildlife sectors.

What H5 HPAI preparedness work is underway for northern Australia?

- The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) plays an important role in avian influenza surveillance and stakeholder engagement activities in northern Australia.
- This includes close engagement with First Nations communities and Indigenous rangers with invaluable knowledge and understanding of the health of Australia's ecosystems. A number of indigenous rangers are helping NAQS extend its surveillance reach into remote parts of northern Australia.
- As part of NAQS' surveillance work, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has veterinarians and biosecurity officers undertaking surveillance and monitoring work on a regular basis – on the mainland, the Torres Strait and in Australia's northern External Territories

- NAQS has also been delivering awareness material and content to the indigenous ranger network, who are our eyes and ears across northern Australia.
- The department is closely monitoring sites across the north of the country where we know birds congregate such as wetlands, dams, and water treatment plants.

If asked, how is the Government engaging key stakeholders in the sector?

- We take a collaborative national approach to such threats to our biosecurity status and our vital agricultural sector and are routinely engaged with key stakeholders through industry bodies and in a variety of forums.
- On 13 June 2024, Animal Health Australia convened a government-poultry industry roundtable on preparedness activities, with a focus on HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b.
- Over 26-27 August 2024, the department will participate in a National Avian Influenza Summit hosted by the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, to convene experts in animal health, biosecurity, and agriculture to discuss Australia's readiness and response capabilities in managing an outbreak of H5 HPAI.

If asked, what is the risk to Australia's dairy industry from H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI)?

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- In March 2024, H5 HPAI was reported for the first time globally in dairy cattle in the United States (US).
- As of 5 August 2024, it has been reported in dairy herds in 13 states of the US.
- The department is receiving updates on the situation directly from the US Government and continues to closely monitor the situation.
- The department remains engaged with key industry bodies to address issues such as information gaps arising from the unprecedented US situation.
- All dairy products imported from the US are subject to a range of risk management measures, including milk being treated using an approved method of pasteurisation.
- The department considers the range of risk management measures effective to manage the biosecurity risk of H5 HPAI in cattle in the US.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

Division: Biosecurity Animal Division

BAD03

HIGH PATHOGENICITY AVIAN INFLUENZA

CAVEAT – THIS KIB WILL NEED TO BE UPDATED AS THE SITUATION IN VICTORIA EVOLVES

CURRENT ISSUE

Australian outbreak

- On 22 May 2024, the Victorian Government confirmed an outbreak of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) on a poultry farm near Meredith in the Golden Plains Shire.
- On 24 May 2024, a second Victorian poultry farm near Terang was confirmed to have HPAI as a result of Agriculture Victoria's tracing activities. This property is approximately 110km from Meredith.
- Testing at the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) determined the outbreak at the index or first premises in Victoria was caused by a strain of HPAI H7N3. The virus on the second poultry farm was found to be a strain of HPAI H7N9, a different strain of the virus.
- The outbreaks in Victoria are not the same strain of HPAI – H5 designated clade 2.3.4.4b – causing concern globally.
- The virus that caused the 2020 HPAI outbreak in the Golden Plains Shire, Victoria was a strain of HPAI H7N7.
- On 24 May 2024 it was reported that Western Australia had detected a low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) strain on a poultry property. This strain was identified as H9N2 and is unrelated to the outbreak in Victoria.

Outbreaks overseas

Since 2020, HPAI H5 designated clade 2.3.4.4b has caused significant deaths of poultry, wild birds, and wild mammals overseas. Sporadic human infections have been reported. In March 2024, this strain was reported in dairy cattle and goats

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SB24-000108

for the first time globally in the United States of America (US). RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

Australian outbreak

- Since 1976, there have been 8 previous outbreaks of HPAI in commercial poultry in Australia. These were all quickly and successfully eradicated with minimal spread among poultry farms.
- Australia has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza outbreaks. This includes having established cost-sharing arrangements and relevant AUSVETPLAN response strategies.
- The Australian Government is supporting the Victorian Government's response to the HPAI outbreak. Affected industries are also involved when an outbreak occurs and have a role in the decision-making processes during the response.
- An Emergency Animal Disease Response Plan (EADRP) proposing to eradicate the HPAI outbreak in Victoria has been reviewed and endorsed by the National Management Group. This means the response effort that is already underway will be eligible for cost sharing under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).
- Due to the disease outbreak and necessary response there may be some flow on effects to supply, however the egg industry is resilient and we have seen some expansion of large farms in recent years, so this increased capacity should help with any supply issues,
- In Australia, LPAI viruses are naturally carried by wild birds, usually waterfowl such as ducks, without causing or showing signs of disease. There has been no indication of an unusual disease event in Australian wild birds leading up to this outbreak.
- Pre-emptive culling of wild birds is not an appropriate response to these incidents, as it is not known to have any impact on the spread of the disease.

Trade Impacts

- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the Department) has notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) of both the H7N3 (on 23 May 2024) and H7N9 detections (on 25 May 2024), consistent with our international obligations.
- The Department is also in the process of formally notifying trading partners of the incident.
- Effective from 24 May 2024, the Department temporarily suspended the issuing of health certificates for all avian and ratite (emu) meat, meat products, by-products, eggs and egg products, live birds and some reproductive material requiring

certification for freedom from notifiable avian influenza (as the disease is now present).

- In the early stages of an emergency animal disease response, and while initial tracing and surveillance is underway, export certification may be restricted more broadly than later in the outbreak, to ensure that affected product is not exported to trading partners and that importing country requirements are being met.
- In addition, importing countries may seek further information regarding management activities and choose to put additional temporary trade suspensions or restrictions in place.
- The department will work with trading partners and export industries as a priority to manage trade impacts and will review the temporary suspension as the outbreak is contained and eradicated.

- The department will work with individual exporters where consignments have been detained overseas on a consignment-by-consignment basis.

Outbreaks overseas

- We are closely monitoring HPAI outbreaks overseas.
  - Since 2020, there have been outbreaks of HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b virus in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, North America, South America and Antarctica.
  - Outbreaks overseas have led to extensive losses of poultry, illness and death of wild birds and mammals, particularly marine mammals and mammals that prey or scavenge on birds. HPAI H5 has recently been reported in dairy cattle and goats in the US.
  - HPAI H5 viruses have never been detected in wild birds, poultry or livestock in Australia.
- A small number of human infections with HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b viruses have been reported globally. Most of these people had close contact with infected birds or dairy cattle and contaminated environments. Current strains of avian influenza do not appear to transmit easily between humans.
- It is believed that wild birds are involved in long-distance spread of the 2.3.4.4b strain.
- In March 2024, the 2.3.4.4b strain was reported in cattle and goats for the first time globally in the US.
  - The department is receiving updates on the situation directly from the US Government.

- As of 28 May 2024, it has been reported in dairy herds in 9 states of the US, and virus fragments have been found in retail milk samples.
- All dairy products imported from the US are subject to a range of risk management measures, including milk being treated using an approved method of pasteurisation, which can inactivate the HPAI virus.
- Standard conditions for composite, highly processed, and cooked products which include dairy ingredients (such as chocolate and cakes) will manage the risks of HPAI in goods for human consumption.

- There is no way to prevent new strains of avian influenza viruses entering Australia with wild birds, or transmission between wild birds. However, Australia has surveillance programs in place to monitor the emergence and spread of avian influenza viruses. This includes undertaking surveillance in wild birds through the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program.
- Australia also has well established emergency response plans for avian influenza. This includes having established cost-sharing arrangements and relevant AUSVETPLAN response strategies.
- In addition, the Australian Government is coordinating national activities to improve awareness and preparedness for further HPAI outbreaks, including for the 2.3.4.4b strain. This includes:
  - utilising the National Coordination Mechanism to organise HPAI preparedness meetings on 15 April and 1 May 2024.
    - Organised by the National Emergency Management Agency, these meetings included participants from the department, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Health and Aged Care and the National Emergency Management Agency, as well as relevant state and territory government agencies as required.
    - The meetings allowed for a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies including the governance and coordination mechanisms necessary for a cross-sectoral emergency response. This is in line with the difficulties seen in managing outbreaks of the H5 2.3.4.4b virus in other countries.
  - considering potential impacts of HPAI on Australia's unique fauna, and any additional preparedness and response arrangements that might be warranted
  - working with poultry industries to improve preparedness
  - supporting Wildlife Health Australia to deliver awareness materials and risk management guidance relevant to wildlife managers and increase surveillance in wild birds

- the Department continuing to work closely with relevant agencies on HPAI preparedness and response activities including the Department of Health and Aged Care, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the National Emergency Management Agency
- working with state and territory governments to increase the likelihood of an HPAI event being detected early through surveillance, noting that state and territory governments are responsible for disease surveillance and control within their borders
- collaborating with countries that have experienced outbreaks of the HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b strain to learn from their experiences
- On 13 June 2024, Animal Health Australia is convening a government-poultry industry roundtable on preparedness activities, with a focus on HPAI H5 Clade 2.3.4.4b
- This is a further demonstration of the collaborative national approach we take to these threats to our biosecurity status and our vital agricultural sector.

Human case in Australia

- I am aware of the case of HPAI in a young child confirmed on 18 May 2024 by the Victorian Department of Health.
- Thankfully the child has made a full recovery, and I would note that the patient acquired the infection overseas and became unwell on returning to Australia in March 2024. No family members in Australia or overseas have reported symptoms.
- Avian influenza does not easily infect humans and any potential infectious period from the Australian case has now passed. There is no ongoing public health risk from this case.
- Importantly, while the Victorian case is HPAI H5, it is not the same as the HPAI H5 clade 2.3.4.4b strains that are of animal health concern overseas. Nor is it in any way related to the current outbreak of HPAI in poultry in Victoria.

Human health risks

- Eggs, poultry and game meat are safe to eat provided they are handled and cooked as per standard food handling practices.
- In Australia there is a very low risk of people becoming infected with avian influenza viruses through normal contact with healthy birds.
- People should avoid direct contact with birds or mammals that are sick or have died unexpectedly and use good hygiene measures for handling and disposing of dead birds or mammals.

BACKGROUND

- The source of Australia's HPAI outbreaks is believed to be low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses introduced via local wild birds, which evolved to HPAI viruses after circulating in poultry.
  - These outbreaks were not caused by HPAI H5 viruses from overseas.
- A risk assessment finalised in June 2023 concluded there is an increased risk of the 2.3.4.4b strain being introduced into Australia by wild birds.
  - There are several factors that contributed to this, such as more species of birds and mammals being infected by this strain in outbreaks overseas
  - It is also expected that outbreaks of HPAI H5 2.3.4.4b would have more severe impacts on Australia's wildlife and poultry industries than we have seen with previous outbreaks of HPAI in Australia
  - The report is available on Wildlife Health Australia's website.
- On 22 May 2024 a Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) meeting was held. The CCEAD agreed that the current outbreak is eradicable and endorsed Victoria's EADRP.
- The CCEAD submitted a paper to the National Management Group (NMG) seeking agreement to cost share the response costs under the EADRA.
- On 23 May 2024 an NMG meeting was held. The NMG endorsed the request to share the response costs for the eradication of the HPAI outbreak in Victoria under the EADRA.
- On 24 May 2024 a second CCEAD meeting was held which considered the response to the second detection near Terang, Victoria.