Read about the joint workplan for HPAI H5N1 and more inside this month's newsletter



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Joint workplan for HPAI H5N1 endorsed by industry and MPI leaders

Industry Chairs and MPI have endorsed a joint industry/MPI workplan for HPAI H5N1 that prioritises prevention and ensuring industry is well placed to manage H5N1 in the long term.

Representatives from PIANZ and EPF met with MPI staff for a workshop in March to develop a focused programme of work over the next six months to ensure an appropriate level of readiness will be achieved across the industry. The outcome of the workshop was a joint workplan with actions for both industry and MPI.

Key actions in the plan include:

- develop a national framework for an industry-led, MPI-supported approach to HPAI H5N1, from initial response through to long-term management
- develop and implement an industry-led operating model for high priority readiness components, including depopulation, disposal and decontamination
- scope and evaluate options for long-term industry management and leadership of HPAI H5N1
- run a joint MPI/industry One Health response exercise
- roll out containerised gas units (CGUs) for use by industry in the event of an HPAI incursion
- continue to build biosecurity preparedness at farm, region and industry level.

Members should contact their industry body for updates on CGUs as work is still ongoing in that area.

Trialling new approaches

To support the readiness work programme, MPI and Tegel have been collaborating to trial heat treatment as a tool for decontaminating HPAI-infected sheds. The treatment uses heat rather than a dry/wet clean with disinfectants. Initial pilots have provided promising results, achieving the temperatures required to deactivate the virus.

Over the coming months, we will further define a process that can be adapted for a variety of shed types in New Zealand, and clarify how to achieve the temperatures required and provide assurance of effective decontamination.

Representatives from industry and MPI visited Australia earlier this month to observe trials of whole-house modified atmosphere trials for depopulation. This will help inform decisions around acquiring the necessary equipment and developing standards and guidance for operationalising this approach in New Zealand.

To vaccinate, or not?

Industry and MPI are monitoring the use of vaccination in Europe, where some countries are exploring the utility of vaccination in areas where poultry farms are close together and risk of contact with wild birds is high.

We are in the unique position of being able to learn from the experience of other countries and consider what they might mean for us, ahead of time. Initial analysis of trials overseas suggests that costs outweigh benefits of the current vaccines available. The cost of vaccination itself (which will need two doses one month apart and then a repeat dose once every 4-6 months), plus the logistics of catching birds to administer the vaccine to keep up immunity, in conjunction with the intensive surveillance required to ensure that influenza viruses of any kind are not circulating sub-clinically in the flock, does not make it a viable tool currently. The international experience indicates that vaccination does not provide complete protection, with 20 percent of vaccinated birds dying from H5N1.

These analyses continue and we will be speaking to counterparts overseas to learn from what they are finding out as their trials progress. Vaccination programmes must still be paired with very high levels of biosecurity and monitoring to minimise the risk of transfer of disease from wild birds to poultry.

For the New Zealand's poultry industry, there are trade and other implications that need to be considered. Industry, with input from MPI, is considering what would work best for our situation. In any event, vaccination would only be considered if HPAI H5N1 arrived here. Even then, it would be one of a suite of tools we would need to engage, alongside strong biosecurity practices.

HPAI H5N1 readiness science reports

As part of the work to prepare for the potential arrival of HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, MPI commissioned a series of technical reports that are informing the approach to planning for H5N1 should it arrive here.

The reports have been published on MPI's website and are available to anyone who may be interested in reading them. The reports examine the likelihood of the H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b virus arriving in New Zealand, establishing and spreading in free-living birds, and of owned birds being exposed to the virus from free-living and other owned birds.

The reports highlight the difference between the H5N1 wildlife-adapted strain of the virus and other strains of avian influenza, due to its ability to spread to owned birds such as commercial and backyard poultry through the movement of free-living (wild) birds. They also highlight the importance that biosecurity will play in reducing the impact of H5N1 if it arrives here.

The reports are available here on the MPI website:

www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/pest-and-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/animal-disease-threats-to-new-zealand/high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza/about-avian-influenza-and-the-risk-to-nz/

Guidance for landowners

MPI has developed guidance for landowners and the public on dealing with sick or dead birds in an HPAI H5N1 outbreak.

The guidance aims to answer questions that MPI and DOC have been receiving from a wide range of groups and individuals about how to deal with sick or dead birds that might be infected with HPAI H5N1, particularly wild birds.

The over-riding message is that handling any sick or dead birds can expose people to the risk of disease, and the best approach is to leave sick or dead birds alone. However, in an outbreak of H5N1, there may be situations when it's necessary for dead birds to be moved and disposed of. The guidance includes steps to follow for moving or disposing of birds, and options for disposal. You can read the guidance on the MPI website:

www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/69504-Guidance-for-dealing-with-sick-or-dead-birds-during-an-HPAI-H5N1-outbreak

Since our last newsletter

Restrictions lifted at Hillgrove in Otago

Movement controls have been lifted from Mainland Poultry's Hillgrove Farm in Otago, after the successful eradication of H7N6 strain of high pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Hillgrove's John McKay says the repopulation is underway and progressing to schedule.

"Two of the three rearing sheds are now populated. That process will continue for the duration of this year, and through to next year until the farm is fully repopulated."

He said a strict HPAI surveillance plan is in place to monitor mortalities and overall bird health as these sheds are repopulated.

"All these results are overseen by MPI and we are pleased that to date, all test results remain negative."

Ministry for Primary Industries chief veterinary officer Dr Mary Van Andel said that while there is still work to be done, the lifting of movement controls is a significant milestone in the response.

“We’re grateful to Mainland Poultry, which did the right thing in notifying us as soon as an exotic disease was suspected and for working with us in partnership to successfully stamp out this disease.”

Good progress is being made to restore trade, with around $300 million of trade in poultry and poultry related products recovered to date. MPI has worked with overseas government counterparts and industry partners in New Zealand to meet market requirements, including proposing alternative assurances to some markets. Alongside this work to restore the lost trade access, MPI is also working with the sector to progress resilient trade access options that can withstand any future HPAI incursions.

HPAI overseas

Brazil, the world's top poultry exporter, confirmed its first outbreak of HPAI in commercial poultry, in the town of Montenegro in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Following full disinfection of the farm, Brazil underwent a 28-day bird flu observation period before declaring itself free of HPAI on 18 June. The outbreak triggered trade bans from multiple countries.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) reported that HPAI H5N1 has been detected in a backyard poultry flock in **Latvia**.

In the **United Kingdom**, mandatory housing measures for poultry and captive birds began to be lifted across England on 15 May 2025. HPAI H5N1 was then confirmed in poultry in West Yorkshire on 11 June and a 3km protection zone declared around the premises. Mandatory stringent biosecurity measures remain in place nationwide.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bird-flu-avian-influenza-latest-situation-in-england

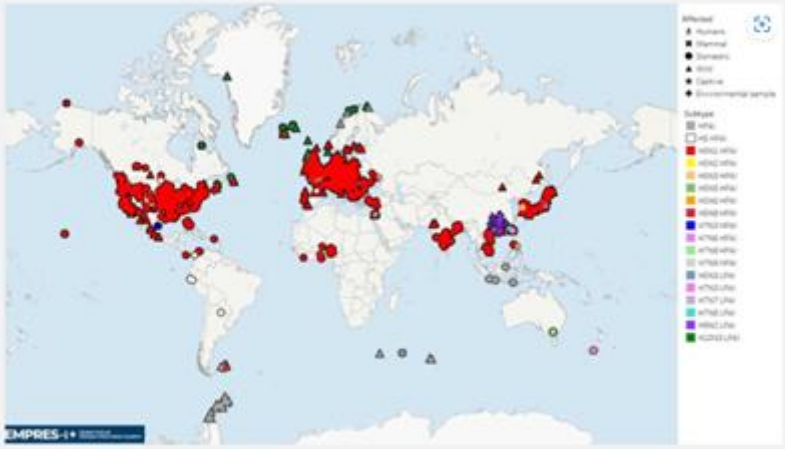
Data published recently by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) shows the **global distribution** of avian influenza with zoonotic potential in the current wave, including our own H7N6 detection.

https://www.fao.org/animal-health/situation-updates/global-aiv-with-zoonotic-potential/en

The FAO website also lists the 551 wild bird species and 93 mammals affected by H5 strains of HPAI, alongside 13 farmed bird species.

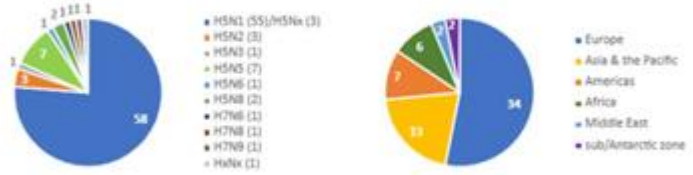
https://www.fao.org/animal-health/situation-updates/global-aiv-with-zoonotic-potential/bird-species-affected-by-h5nx-hpai/en

Map 1. *Global distribution of AIV with zoonotic potential* observed since 1 October 2024 (i.e. current wave)*



Symbols may overlap for events in similar geographic locations.

Figure 1. *Number of countries reported HPAI* ***since 1 October 2024*** *by subtype (left) and by region (right) as of 21 April 2025* (territory/area or sub/Antarctic zone)



Source: WOAH WAHIS portal, government and publications.

Contact us

The Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand (PIANZ) and the Egg Producers Federation (EPF) have joined with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) to provide farmers with this update about our preparations for high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1.

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Egg Producers Federation of New Zealand (Inc)

PIANZ

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