

Issue 11, 18 September 2025

Have your say on proposed regulations to manage H5N1 in commercial poultry

Overseas experience tells us that if the H5N1 strain of HPAI arrives in New Zealand, it is highly likely to become widespread in wild birds and be impossible to eradicate. The same learnings gained from talking to farmers overseas showed us that consistent, high standards of biosecurity are our best chance to minimise the impact and spread of H5N1 for our farms and our flocks.

We are in the unique position now of knowing what to do to strengthen biosecurity standards, before H5N1 arrives. MPI and industry have been working closely to prepare for HPAI H5N1 and to develop a long-term approach that minimises the impact on industry. Establishing a long-term approach to manage this disease will give farmers the best possible chance of protecting businesses, and in doing so, protect New Zealand's poultry industry.

As part of this work, MPI is proposing to create regulations under section 165 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to manage HPAI H5N1 in poultry. The proposed regulations are designed to incentivise farmers to establish consistent biosecurity standards that maximise protection of their farms and the wider industry against H5N1.

The proposed regulations would ensure New Zealand has the necessary biosecurity practices, reporting, and compliance tools in place to manage the risk that H5N1 poses to commercial poultry operators and minimise the disease impact to wild and captive birds, other animals and people.

"The Boards of the EPF and PIANZ support the intentions of the proposed regulations from MPI. In this consultation process, your feedback as farmers is valuable to make clear what impact the proposals could have on your own businesses," said Executive Director, Michael Brooks.

"Our industry plays a major role in the food supply of egg and poultry products to New Zealanders, and in exporting these products to other countries. We have an obligation

to protect that role, so it is in every farmer's best interest to have tools in place that protect their flocks and our wider industry, should H5N1 arrive here. This is your chance to have your say in shaping the tools to best suit your farms' needs."

The proposals do not include management of HPAI H5N1 in wild birds, farmed or captive non-poultry birds used for food production (such as ostriches), other animals (such as cattle or cats), or people.

The proposed regulations aim to support good biosecurity practices and early reporting of infection in poultry, protect public health and the domestic food supply, and provide consistent standards across the industry.

Depending on the feedback received during consultation, some or all of the proposals could be developed into regulations under the Biosecurity Act 1993.

The proposals

Proposal 1: Commercial poultry operators must develop an avian biosecurity control programme

Commercial poultry operators would have to develop an avian biosecurity control programme. Guidance would be available to support operators to develop their programme.

An avian biosecurity control programme would:

- identify the risks associated with HPAI H5N1 on-farm
- specify how the operator would manage those risks and meet on-farm biosecurity standards.

Proposal 2: All poultry operators/owners must meet appropriate biosecurity standards

Regulations would set biosecurity standards for certain activities. These could include:

- depopulation
- disposal
- cleaning and disinfection.

Commercial poultry operators would use their avian biosecurity control programmes to specify how they will meet biosecurity standards. These requirements would also apply to semi-commercial poultry operators and non-commercial poultry owners, as relevant and appropriate.

Proposal 3: Commercial poultry operators must keep appropriate records and provide information to MPI when required

This proposal would set record-keeping requirements for avian biosecurity control programmes. These would be similar to the record-keeping requirements for risk management programmes under the Animal Products Regulations 2021.

HPAI H5N1 is a notifiable organism under the Biosecurity Act 1993, meaning people must report to MPI if they suspect the presence of HPAI H5N1. Under proposal 3, commercial poultry operators with avian biosecurity control programmes could also be required to provide detailed information to MPI if they suspect the presence of HPAI H5N1 on their property.

Proposal 4: Avian biosecurity control programmes must be audited

Regular audits would ensure biosecurity standards are being met. Audits would be risk-based. High-risk operations are likely to need annual auditing. Smaller or lower-risk operations may not need such frequent auditing.

Proposal 5: Regulations provide for appropriate offences and penalties

Proposal 5 would provide for offences and penalties for breaching regulations. A person who commits an offence against biosecurity regulations is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of $5,000 for an individual or $15,000 for a corporation. Regulations would need to specify the breaches that are intended to be offences.

Proposal 6: Costs of auditing are at least partially recovered from commercial poultry operators

Auditing would come with costs to MPI (when MPI audits – third-party auditors could set their own fees). MPI proposes to at least partially recover these costs through existing fees.

Semi-commercial operators and non-commercial owners

Some of the proposed regulations could also apply to semi-commercial poultry operators and non-commercial poultry owners who keep poultry but not as their main source of income.

For example, semi-commercial poultry operators and non-commercial poultry owners could be required to use specific disposal or cleaning methods and provide information to MPI if their birds get sick. Some fines for non-compliance could apply to these poultry owners as well.

Join the webinar

Industry members can attend an industry-only webinar on 25 September to hear more about the proposals. Details, including the webinar link, will be emailed to members.

MPI is also hosting two wider public webinars on the proposals that members are welcome to attend if you're unable to attend the industry-only session.

Wednesday 8 October, 6pm

Registration link

Thursday 16 October, 2pm

Registration link

Click on the link to register.

Visit the consultation page on MPI's website to read the consultation documents and to make a submission: https://www.mpi.govt.nz/consultations/proposed-regulations-for-managing-high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza-h5n1-in-poultry/

Consultation runs until 2 November 2025.

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

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

Prepared by:

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