Department for Environment and Water managed lands

H5 Bird Flu and Operational Response in Wildlife

Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water

Purpose

The H5 bird flu operational plan was developed to guide decision-making for management of H5 bird flu on Department for Environment and Water (DEW) managed lands (e.g. reserves established under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*). This document provides overarching guidance on preparedness, response and recovery actions as well as management arrangements within this context to support and protect wildlife; and mitigate risks to people, industry, and public amenities.

How H5 bird flu is managed

Across South Australia, H5 bird flu is managed through a coordinated emergency response framework that aims to protect human health, wildlife, industries and public amenity. Under South Australia's State Emergency Management Plan, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) leads responses to animal and plant biosecurity emergencies including H5 bird flu. In support of these responses, DEW provides specialist advice on wildlife and conservation values, and implementing response activities on DEW-managed land in accordance with departmental policies and procedures.

The future spread, impacts and movement of H5 bird flu in Australia is uncertain, requiring a flexible and adaptive response. As the disease cannot be eradicated from wildlife populations once established, management focuses on monitoring, surveillance and biosecurity measures to identify and mitigate its impacts. Response actions are guided by risk considerations and tailored to local conditions, vulnerable species and the scale of an outbreak, allowing strategies, resources and control measures to be adjusted as new information emerges. This dynamic approach supports effective decision-making and often involves a coordinated multi-agency response to minimise impacts on wildlife, agricultural industries and public health.

Monitoring and surveillance

DEW is supporting PIRSA in the ongoing monitoring and surveillance of H5 bird flu to detect new outbreaks in wildlife populations, track disease spread, assess impacts on wildlife populations, and inform response activities. Additional information may be collected by DEW through routine wildlife surveys, targeted monitoring programs, and surveys of healthy wildlife populations.

Biosecurity measures

In addition to baseline DEW biosecurity measures, specific requirements have been developed to help prevent human-mediated spread of H5 bird flu and protect human health. Good biosecurity practices include cleaning and disinfecting footwear, equipment and vehicles, using suitable personal protective equipment, and limiting non-essential operations. Additional biosecurity measures may be implemented where required to further reduce the risk of disease transmission between sites and wildlife populations.



Response actions

Decision-making around response actions is guided by priority species, the scale and proximity of an outbreak, and risk to human health and public amenity. Measures are tailored to the priorities and characteristics of individual sites, as outlined in the regional plans. Links to these plans are provided below.

Actions to support the protection of priority wildlife populations from the impacts of H5 bird flu may include:

- Increased surveillance
- Sample collection and testing
- Enhanced biosecurity measures
- Conservation actions, such as predator control or vaccination
- Carcass management
- Visitor management

In some circumstances, humane euthanasia of severely affected animals may be undertaken to support animal welfare, conservation and public safety outcomes.



DEW preparedness, response and recovery plans

To support regional preparedness, response and recovery, DEW has developed seven regional planning documents aligned with National Parks and Wildlife Service regions. These plans outline priority environmental features, key sites and regional considerations.

Priority species have been identified through assessments of state and national conservation status and the Commonwealth susceptibility and risk assessment for Australian bird and mammal species. Relevant South Australian priority species have been incorporated into region-specific plans, with dedicated species plans written for:

- Australian sea lions
- Long-nosed fur seals

Threat mitigation projects have also been developed for selected priority species. These initiatives aim to reduce existing threats and strengthen population resilience for potential impacts from H5 bird flu.

Find out more

Additional information can be found in abridged versions of the DEW H5 bird flu regional plans, which provide more detailed local context:

- Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
- Yorke and Mid North
- Riverland and Murraylands
- Kangaroo Island
- Limestone Coast
- Eyre and Far West
- Flinders and Outback

Access the latest information at www.birdflu.gov.au

or for South Australian specific information at www.birdflu.sa.gov.au

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The development of this plan was supported by the Australian government

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