H5 Bird Flu and the Riverland and Murraylands Region

Government of South Australia
Department for Environment and Water

Regional summary statement

The Riverland and Murraylands region contains extensive wetlands, floodplains and river systems associated with the River Murray, Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth which support large populations of migratory and non-migratory shorebirds, waterfowl, and other waterbirds. The region's interconnected waterways and high bird abundance make it a priority area for H5 bird flu preparedness and response planning.

Priority features of the region

- Internationally significant wetlands, including Ramsar-listed sites.
- Habitat for threatened bird species and other wildlife.
- Connectivity between inland waterways, the Lower Lakes, Coorong and coastal environments.
- Marine mammal habitat for Australian sea lions, long-nosed fur seals and dolphins.
- High levels of tourism, recreation and visitor use across wetland and river environments.
- Environmental pressures from habitat modification, water regulation, drought and climate change.

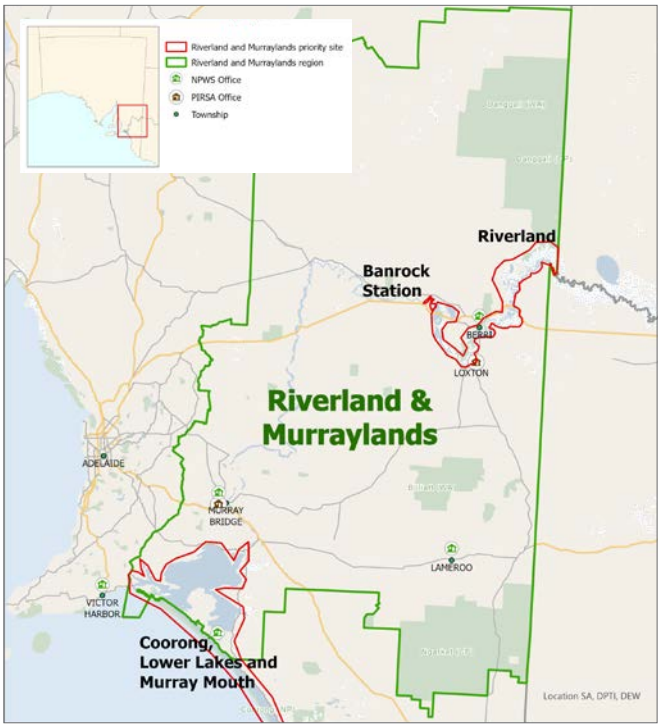
Priority sites

Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth covers approximately 140,000 hectares, extending approximately 140 km along the coast. The site includes the Coorong North and South Lagoons, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and the Murray Mouth. This highly interconnected system of freshwater, estuarine, and marine environments supports a large diversity of habitat types, and resultantly numerous species of shorebirds, waterbirds and other wildlife.

Key features: Ramsar-listed site, recognised nationally for its ecological importance and considered a priority ecological asset in South Australia; critical breeding and feeding areas for waterbirds and migratory species; habitat for threatened species including fairy tern,

Riverland and Murraylands region H5 bird flu priority sites



Australasian bittern and orange-bellied parrot; important haul-out areas for long-nosed fur seals.

Riverland

The Riverland covers a large section of the South Australian River Murray corridor, extending from the Victorian border to Banrock Station. The area includes the internationally recognised Riverland Ramsar Wetland and the privately owned Ramsar-listed Banrock Station Wetland Complex. The diverse terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, including floodplains, wetlands, woodlands and river habitats, provide critical habitat for migratory waterbirds, waterfowl and migratory waders.

Key features: supports a rich diversity of fauna; more than 170 recorded bird species; important breeding habitat for large colonies of waterbirds; significant habitat for regent parrot and other threatened species; diverse and extensive river red gum floodplains and wetlands, and refuge habitat during drought conditions.

Cultural significance and key stakeholders

First Nations connections

The Riverland and Murraylands region is home to the Traditional Owners and custodians of Country, including the Ngarrindjeri People, the First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee Region, and the Ngawait People. The region's rivers, wetlands, floodplains, lakes and cultural landscapes hold deep cultural significance and support ongoing cultural practices and caring for Country. First Nations peoples are key stewards of the region's landscapes, coastal environments and biodiversity.

Stakeholders

Stakeholders whose interests, activities or proximity may be affected by, or relevant to, H5 bird flu management include the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board, Limestone Coast Landscape Board, Murray–Darling Basin Authority, SA Water, local councils, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC), Australian Landscape Trust, Friends of Parks and Nature South Australia, BirdLife Australia, Birds SA, Conservation Council SA, landholders and leaseholders, conservation and volunteer organisations, and community groups.

Management actions and at-risk wildlife species

Management actions for increasing the resilience of wildlife at-risk from H5 bird flu are being implemented across the region. For example, a current management action includes a Department for Environment and Water-led project managing impacts of key pest species across Chowilla Riverland Ramsar floodplain.

Additional conservation management actions to be explored include assessment of vaccination and insurance population feasibility. Listed below are several of the key species present in the Riverland and Murraylands region identified as being susceptible to, or at risk from, H5 bird flu. Benefits to species such as these are the primary intended outcomes for current and future threat mitigation work.

- Australian painted-snipe
- Australian sea lion
- Australasian bittern
- bar-tailed godwit
- black-tailed godwit
- common greenshank
- curlew sandpiper
- fairy tern
- far eastern curlew
- great knot
- lesser sand plover
- orange-bellied parrot
- regent parrot



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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