

25 June 2024

## Advisory for wildlife care and rescue agencies in NSW avian influenza (AI) biosecurity emergency zones.

Dear Wildlife Care and Rescue Agencies,

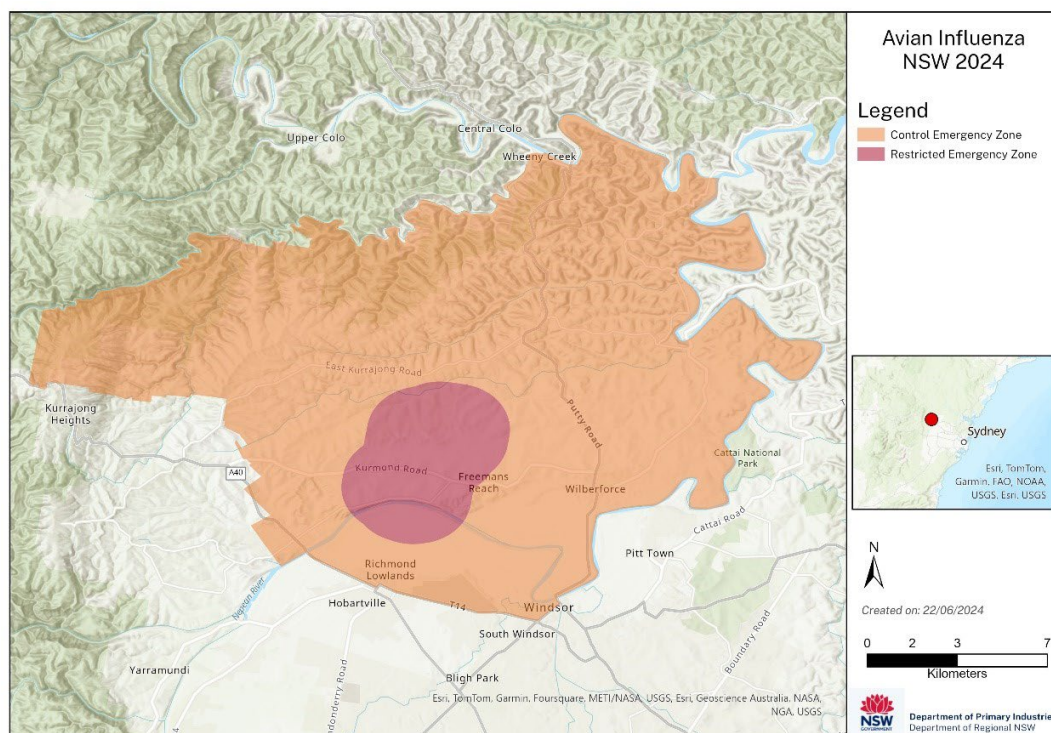
NSW DPI has expanded the areas covered by biosecurity emergency zones following a second case of avian influenza (AI) in a chicken meat farm in NSW.

The biosecurity emergency order applies to wild birds in the care of wildlife rehabilitators within both the Restricted Emergency Zone and Control Emergency Zones.

This is the same AI strain (H7N8) as detected in NSW earlier this month. It is however different to the strain impacting farms in Victoria. Importantly, testing has shown that the NSW cases are not caused by the H5N1 strain that is affecting wildlife and causing concern globally.

### What does the emergency zone cover?

The below map outlines the area covered by the control zone. [Click here](#) to search your address.



## What are the requirements of the emergency order?

The biosecurity emergency order requires:

- Implementation of an AI restricted emergency zone within a two kilometre radius around the NSW detection.
- Movement restrictions of all avian influenza susceptible birds into and out of the restricted and control emergency zones.
- All avian influenza susceptible birds within the control and restricted emergency zones to be housed to prevent contact with wild birds.

The emergency order will remain in place for a period of six months. An explanation guide to the emergency order is available [here](#).

## How should health monitoring and care be conducted for wild birds in emergency zones?

Wildlife rehabilitators should follow the guidelines in the [Wildlife Health Australia resource, High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) and Wildlife In Australia: A risk mitigation toolbox for wildlife care providers](#). Ensure that you are following the PPE and biosecurity measures recommended in the toolbox when handling wildlife.

All wildlife in care should be monitored for signs of avian influenza and any suspect cases reported to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Clinical signs in wild birds are largely neurological, respiratory or gastrointestinal. These can include:

- incoordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- twisted necks or other abnormal posture
- inability to stand or fly
- diarrhoea
- difficulty breathing, coughing or sneezing
- swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- cloudiness or change in colour of the eyes
- sudden death.

Some species may not show any signs of disease or show only very mild signs. In some cases, birds may die suddenly without displaying any clinical signs or be found dead. If a wild bird dies but has previously shown any clinical signs of AI, ensure they are tested.

## **What are the housing restrictions for wild birds in emergency zones?**

The biosecurity emergency order requires wild birds in care of wildlife rehabilitators to be housed in a way that prevents contact with other birds.

Feed, water and bedding materials should be controlled to prevent access with other wild birds. Ideally, wild birds should be kept in a secure house or aviary. If this is not possible, netting or similar confinement should be used.

## **Am I at risk of getting avian influenza? How can I protect myself?**

Transmission of avian influenza to humans is rare. Most people are not at risk of contracting avian influenza.

You may be at higher risk if you have contact with birds or animals that are infected with avian influenza, or their secretions (saliva, blood and poo).

When handling sick birds or carcasses, wear appropriate personal protective equipment to reduce your risk of getting avian influenza. This includes a P2/N95 mask, goggles, gloves and protective clothing.

For more information on preventing avian influenza visit the [NSW Health avian influenza factsheet](#).

## **Can rehabilitated wild birds in care be released within emergency zones?**

Birds that are showing any signs consistent with avian influenza should not be released and should be reported to the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline.

Birds in care should be observed for clinical signs of avian influenza for a minimum of five days. If no signs of avian influenza have developed, the bird may be released within the zone, as close as possible to the location at which it was found.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of avian influenza in poultry?**

Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by an influenza virus.

Signs and symptoms in poultry include:

- Sudden increase in bird deaths
- Sudden decline in feed and/or water consumption
- Unusually quiet birds
- Unusually depressed birds
- Decreased vocalisation
- Any decline in egg production from normal to cessation
- Sudden appearance of pale shell eggs or eggs without shells
- Any birds with swollen heads/combs/wattles

- Any birds with dark combs and wattles
- Any birds with nervous signs e.g. head shaking, head and neck tremors, unsteady gait  
Abnormal position of head and neck in a reasonable % of birds
- Respiratory disease e.g. breathing difficulties, coughing, sneezing
- Purplish patches on the legs and unfeathered skin
- Watery diarrhoea

Clinical signs in wild birds are largely neurological, respiratory or gastrointestinal. Wildbirds are more likely to show:

- incoordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- twisted necks or other abnormal posture
- inability to stand or fly
- diarrhoea
- difficulty breathing, coughing or sneezing
- swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- cloudiness or change in colour of the eyes
- sudden death.

Some species may not show any signs of disease or show only very mild signs. In some cases, birds may die suddenly without displaying any clinical signs or be found dead.

### **How do I report any unusual signs or symptoms?**

Avian influenza is a notifiable disease in NSW. If you notice symptoms consistent with avian influenza, you must report it immediately to the 24-hour Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888 or the Local Land Services on 1300 795 299 (during business hours)

More information on Avian Influenza can be found on the [NSW DPI website](#).

Wildlife Health Australia provides a range of resources to support wildlife carers, including a risk mitigation toolbox for wildlife managers and carers to assist in mitigating the risk of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in Australian wildlife populations:

- [High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) and Wildlife in Australia: A RISK MITIGATION TOOLBOX FOR WILDLIFE MANAGERS](#)
- [High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza \(HPAI\) and Wildlife in Australia A RISK MITIGATION TOOLBOX FOR WILDLIFE CARE PROVIDERS](#)
- [Factsheet: Avian Influenza in Wild Birds in Australia Oct 2023 \(wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au\)](#)

More information on the cases in Victoria can be found on the [Agriculture Victoria website](#).