



H5 Bird Flu advice for tourism operators

This factsheet provides advice to tourism operators around what to do now **that the H5N1 strain of bird flu has arrived in New Zealand**. Whether you provide close-up wildlife encounters or transit through wildlife areas, the following information applies to you.

Avian Influenza in New Zealand

Avian influenza (also called bird flu) is a contagious viral disease that affects both domestic and wild birds and some mammals. The new H5N1 strain spreads easily and will threaten New Zealand's high-risk species. Close contact with infected wildlife may be a risk to human health.

If you see 3 or more sick or dead wild birds, marine mammals or other wildlife in one place, call MPI's exotic pest and disease hotline on 0800 80 99 66.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

What to look out for

Birds:

- Loss of balance, incoordination, drooped wings, splayed or dragging legs, twisting of the head and neck, trembling, shaking, seizures, collapse
- Swollen head, eyes closed or weepy, abnormal eye appearance, open beak breathing, sneezing or coughing sounds, gurgling/ wheezing
- Loose watery droppings, bruises on the legs and neck

Seals, sealions and dolphins:

- Beached or stranded animals, aborted pups
- Tremors, convulsions, paralysis (floppy limbs/ flippers)
- Difficulty breathing, discharges from the nose or mouth

For more background information and the signs to watch out for in wildlife see: [Avian influenza: Wildlife health](#)

What DOC will do and what you should do

DOC will

- provide updates to all concessionaires and permit holders as required
- notify any track closures the same way as health and safety notices

You should

- Make sure the contact details for your DOC concession are up to date so we can contact you if needed.
- Keep visiting DOC's website for bird flu updates and the latest information about track closures or restrictions, and how they may impact your planned trips
- Keep visiting MPI's website for the status of local outbreaks
- Always follow any signage at the site.

If you see sick or dead wild birds, marine mammals or other wildlife at a site and there are no alert warnings online and no signs in place, call MPI's exotic pest and disease hotline on 0800 80 99 66 or report online at report.mpi.govt.nz.

Keep your distance

- Keep to at least the recommended safe viewing or interaction with wildlife distances and any other conditions shown on your permit. These distances may increase if there is an active outbreak – check the DOC website for updates and watch out for any notices or warning signs.
- Stressed birds are more likely to contract or die from HPAI. They may also move to a new area and possibly spread the disease.

Prevent spread

- Avoid activities such as supplementary feeding or chumming that encourage birds, seals, sealions or dolphins to gather.

- Remember the virus can be spread between wildlife and domestic animals and vice versa.



Keep it clean

- Ensure passengers and tour guides start their tour with clean boots and equipment
- Ensure passengers and tour guides use foot baths where provided
- Keep footbaths clean, top up disinfectant regularly or as soon as the bath is contaminated with debris.
- Always carry disinfectant and boot brushes so you can make sure boots are clean prior to disinfection before re-entering your vehicle.
- Clean your vehicle between sites including tyres.
- Use a recommended disinfectant at the right concentrations (see table below)

Keep people safe

- Ensure passengers and tour guides are not interacting with sick or dead wildlife
- Ensure passengers and tour guides practice good personal hygiene through regular handwashing or alcohol-based hand sanitisers and do not eat or drink until hands are clean. Phones can be cleaned using alcohol wipes.
- If you are unable to keep humans safe from the risk of HPAI infection, consider suspending the tour.
- Close contact with infected wildlife may be a risk to human health. Humans can catch it from breathing in infected droplets and dust as well as through contaminated surfaces, objects, or materials.
- **If you develop conjunctivitis or flu-like symptoms after contact with wildlife or poultry, contact a medical professional immediately**

During active H5 bird flu outbreaks, there may be huge numbers of dead and dying wildlife which will be extremely distressing to witness. Consider the negative impacts of continuing to run wildlife tours during such times.

Additional advice for wildlife watching

Remain vigilant for the signs of H5 bird flu in wildlife.

Check your permit conditions for your current viewing distances.

These may need to be increased to prevent wildlife disturbance or viral spread. Use the distances below as a guide but be prepared to increase these in response to the birds' behaviour or advice from agencies.

Marine mammal viewing:

- See [Sharing our coasts with marine mammals](#) for general advice.
- Keep at least 50 metres away from birds at sea
- Do not drive boats through rafts of birds.

Landings on islands/ visits to colonies (on foot):

1. Keep at least 200 metres away from flocks of birds on the ground, colonies or burrows.
 - Keep at least 50 metres away from cliffs with nesting birds.
2. Clean and disinfect shoes/ boots and any equipment used before and after visiting the colony.

Close-up interactions with wildlife (including feeding):

3. If there are active outbreaks in your area you should strongly consider suspending any tourism activities that involve close contact with wildlife

Travelling through wildlife areas e.g. hiking, biking, kayaking:

- Do not disturb wildlife.
 - Keep at least 200 metres away from flocks of birds on the ground, colonies or burrows.
 - Keep at least 50 metres away from cliffs with nesting birds
 - Do not travel through groups of birds or rafts (on water).
4. Clean and disinfect shoes/ boots and any equipment used before and after the trip.

Disinfectants for H5 bird flu

- Remove all soil, mud, faecal matter before applying a disinfectant.
- Follow label directions and precautions for the disinfectant product.
- Some disinfectants irritate the skin and respiratory tract. Make sure you are familiar with the adverse effects and take necessary precautions when using them.
- Don't just empty your disinfectant to the environment, any waste/ used product must be disposed of appropriately according to your local council regulations.
- Ensure your disinfectants are
 - in date
 - made up to the correct concentration
 - allowed to work for the appropriate contact time before you rinse them off.

Disinfectant	Concentration	Contact time
Virkon	1 tab per 500ml or 10g powder per litre water	10 mins
SteriGene	50mls per 5 litres of water	20 mins
Bleach (5-6% sodium hypochlorite)	1 part bleach to 9 parts water (Cold water only)	10 mins
Prevail	25mls per litre of water	5 mins
Isopropyl alcohol	60-90%	15 secs