

SAFETY BULLETIN

117 - Avian Influenza (Bird Flu)

Background

Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) is a highly contagious disease that mainly affects birds but can also infect a range of other animal species. It occurs naturally in wild bird populations and can spread to poultry, mammals, and other wildlife through direct contact or contaminated environments.

While the risk to the general public remains low, outbreaks of avian influenza can have significant impacts on animal health, agriculture, and the environment. The virus may be present in infected animals, carcasses, feathers, droppings, nesting materials and contaminated areas.

Although infections in humans are rare, they can occur following close or prolonged contact with infected animals or contaminated materials. Good hygiene practices, avoiding contact with wildlife, and following biosecurity requirements are important measures to reduce the risk of exposure.

Safety Issues

Some Programmed employees may encounter birds and other wildlife as part of their normal work activities, particularly when undertaking work in outdoor environments. Awareness of avian influenza risks and following appropriate control measures are essential to protect employees, minimise the risk of exposure and help prevent the spread of disease.

Employees may encounter sick, injured or deceased birds and wildlife. Contact with affected animals, carcasses, feathers, droppings, nesting materials or contaminated environments may present a potential health risk and should be avoided wherever possible.

Sick, injured or deceased birds or wildlife should not be touched, handled or moved. Any sighting should be treated with caution and reported promptly to Supervisors. Employees should keep clear of the area and avoid any direct contact with animals or potentially contaminated materials until further advice is received.

Health and Wellbeing

Finding sick or deceased wildlife can be distressing for some people. Employees are encouraged to speak with their Supervisor and access Programmed's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Sonder if they require support.

Employees can download the Sonder app from the app store, and login with their PERSOL or Programmed email address and password.

Sonder can also be reached by phone by calling AU - 1800 234 560 or NZ - 0800 447 444.

More information on Sonder can be found [here](#)

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO CONTROL RISK

- Record the location and details of the animal, notify your Supervisor immediately, and report unusual bird deaths or suspected avian influenza cases to the:
Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888
- Ensure avian influenza hazards are considered in SWMS/JSEAs, and risk assessments where work involves direct contact with birds, animals, or their environments.
- Use appropriate PPE and hygiene controls for higher-risk activities involving animals or contaminated environments.
- Wash hands thoroughly after working outdoors, particularly in areas frequented by birds or wildlife.
- Avoid touching or handling sick, injured, or dead birds and animals.

For more information contact safety@programmed.com.au

Date of Issue: 27/08/2025

Report all incidents and near misses

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.