

3 August 2026

Dear environmental and friends' groups volunteers,

Highly pathogenic H5N1 Avian Influenza – surveillance and reporting

Mornington Peninsula Shire is not the responsible agency for reporting or responding to H5N1. The response is being managed by the Victorian Government. We are sharing this with you for educational purposes.

The H5N1 Avian flu (H5 bird flu) strain has been detected in birds across several states, with the latest being the first reported case in Portland, Victoria on 30 July 2026. The Shire would like to ensure our partners, who care for our local flora and fauna, are aware of the risk to our municipality as the virus spreads.

H5 bird flu differs from other avian influenza strains as it is more infectious and can cause mass mortality in large numbers of wild birds and marine mammals including seals, sea lions, dolphins. There is no effective treatment for it and the prognosis for birds and some mammals affected with the disease is poor. Fortunately, the transmission into the human population is extremely rare.

H5 bird flu is highly infectious and can be spread by the movement of birds, people and equipment, biosecurity practices are crucial to minimise further disease spread.

The signs and symptoms in wild birds, other than sudden death, are:

- ruffled feathers, depression, closed eyes
- 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
- lack of coordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- twisted necks or other unusual posture

You may not know if birds you come across have H5 bird flu, however you should treat them as though they do in line with the advice below.

For birds and wildlife:

- **AVOID** contact with sick or dead wild birds or wildlife and their environment
- **RECORD** what you see
- **REPORT** wildlife sickness or deaths to DEECA [using this form](#) or call the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on **1800 675 888** in line with the guidance below.

Report clusters of 5 or more sick or dead wild birds of any species, anywhere in Victoria.

Contact Us

1300 850 600
mornpen.vic.gov.au
customerservice@mornpen.vic.gov.au

By post: Private Bag 1000,
90 Besgrove Street, Rosebud VIC 3939
ABN: 53 159 890 143

Report even one:

- wild seabird, waterbird, shorebird or bird of prey, including penguins, pelicans, eagles, hawks.
- marine mammal including seals, sea lions, dolphins.

Following a report, Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action will assess each report and decide if testing is needed. We understand this may be distressing, but every report is useful.

Updates and more information can be found on the following sites birdflu.gov.au (Commonwealth Government – nationwide updates and information) agriculture.vic.gov.au/bird-flu (Victorian Government – statewide updates and information from Agriculture Victoria) emergencydashboard.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Preparedness (Mornington Peninsula Shire website – local information on emergency preparedness for all hazards).

Risks of H5 bird flu for humans

Bird flu viruses rarely spread to people, but it can happen through close contact with infected animals, alive or dead, and less commonly through contact with places or things sick birds have contaminated. The Department of Health advises that good occupational health and safety practices should be observed to minimise the risk of transmission.

What to do if you feel unwell after disposing of dead birds or wildlife

See your doctor if you develop flu-like symptoms after having contact with sick or dead birds or animals. For more information about human health and bird flu visit the [Better Health Channel](#) or the [Australian Centre for Disease Control/ Bird flu](#)

Groups like yours are an invaluable resource to assist the Shire and Agriculture Victoria to keep our communities safe and to minimise the spread of H5 bird flu.

Thank you for your efforts in caring for our local flora and fauna.

Sincerely,



Andrew Brick
Team Leader – Community Resilience and Emergency Management