

## Disposal of bird carcasses from public and private land: Local Government

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## Introduction

**Australia remains free of H5 avian influenza (H5 bird flu)**, the strain which has been causing significant wildlife mortality globally.

For more information about H5 bird flu in wildlife please refer to the Wildlife Health Australia factsheet or visit their website at <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au>

The following has been developed to provide guidance to local councils about reporting and the safe collection and disposal of bird carcasses where the likelihood of H5 bird flu is low, as is currently the case.

**In the absence of confirmed cases of H5 bird flu, the disposal of bird carcasses should proceed per current council procedures and guidelines.** NSW DPIRD has not imposed biosecurity restrictions nor requires permits for the movement and disposal of bird and animal carcasses at present.

This advice is subject to change in the event of confirmed cases of H5 avian influenza in Australia.

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## Report

Council staff are encouraged to report multiple sick or dead wild birds (>5) using the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (NSW DPIRD) online reporting tool [Report sick or dead wild birds](#) or calling the toll-free Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (also known as the 'EAD Hotline') on **1800 675 888**.

Clear location details are required to enable sampling of mass mortalities of wild birds. The online reporting portal allows you to add a 'pin drop' of the location. Alternatively, you can use [What3words](#), a grid reference from your mobile phone and photos of the carcasses and the location.

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## Dispose

The collection and disposal of wild bird carcasses is the responsibility of landholders and/or land managers. Private landholders are responsible for collection and disposal of carcasses on their land if they want them removed.

It is likely that some landholders will contact their local council for assistance. Councils will need to determine what level of assistance, if any, they provide in such circumstances.

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## Advice to be provided to private residents or landholders

Refer to [NSW DPIRD guidance for the public: What to do if you find one or more sick or dead birds](#).

Residents are advised to:

1. where possible, leave the carcasses to decompose naturally and prevent access by people, livestock or pets as dead wildlife may still pose a disease transmission risk
  2. If you must handle a dead animal, follow the safety advice below to protect yourself:
  3. Ensure you are safe (away from a road or ledge)
  4. Check for signs of life (breathing) before going near the animal
  5. Wear gloves and consider using a tool to pick up the dead animal
  6. After handling any wild animal carcass and removing gloves ALWAYS wash and dry hands or use an alcohol based hand sanitiser (>60% alcohol)
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7. To dispose of a dead animal, place the body in a strong, leak proof plastic bag and seal it. Place the bag inside a second bag and seal the second bag
8. Refer to your local council or state/territory government agency for instructions on safe disposal
9. Wash any clothing or clean and disinfect any equipment or materials that may have touched the animal
10. Keep children and pets away and do not let them near surfaces the animal may have touched.

Councils are encouraged to determine what specialist commercial waste collection services may be available in their local government area to support the collection and disposal of carcasses.

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## Disposal of carcasses from public land

Public land managers are responsible for the management of carcasses on public land.

The collection and disposal of carcasses is at the discretion of each council. Carcasses may be left in-situ where there is a low likelihood of exposure to the public, livestock or pets.

It is recommended to collect and dispose of carcasses where they are likely to be encountered by members of the public, such as areas used by children or pets, on a public right of way or an area frequented by the public and in areas where wild birds regularly feed, breed or roost.

Council staff who collect carcasses from either public or private land are advised to:

- not touch carcasses with bare hands.
  - wear a face mask, long-sleeved clothing, disposable gloves or gloves that can be disinfected, and shoes that can be cleaned
  - wash any clothing or clean and disinfect any equipment or materials that may have touched the animal
  - use tongs, shovels or other appropriate equipment to handle the carcasses
  - alternatively, lift the bird(s) using an inverted bag. Once the carcass is grasped, the bag can be turned back on itself and tied off.
  - the bag should then be placed in a second leak proof plastic bag, ensuring not to contaminate the outside of the outer bag
  - remove any gloves and place them in the second bag as well
  - tie the second bag closed and dispose of in a council 'red bin' or take the bagged carcasses in a sealed container to an EPA approved landfill for burial or composting (if permitted)
  - clean and disinfect any materials and equipment used
  - wash hands with soap and hot water or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after handling carcasses.
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## Monitoring staff health and welfare

In the event of a confirmed outbreak of H5N1 Avian influenza, staff exposed to birds or other animals (including people wearing recommended PPE) should monitor themselves for new illness symptoms, including conjunctivitis (eye redness).

Please refer to the [NSW Health Guidelines](#) for anyone who may have been exposed to avian influenza from birds, animals, wildlife or their contaminated environments.

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## For more information

- Information about Avian influenza is available on the NSW DPIRD website [Avian influenza | Department of Primary Industries](#)
- Wildlife Health Australia has an [online toolbox](#) to assist wildlife carers and managers.
- [Be careful around wildlife: protect yourself](#) provides advice from NSW Health for people interacting with any wildlife
- National biosecurity manuals are at [farmbiosecurity.com.au](#). The manuals help animal owners establish and strengthen biosecurity measures.
- Information about Avian Influenza is available at [birdflu.gov.au](#)
- [National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines](#) outline best practices for biosecurity. They are for those working with wildlife, including wild birds.
- Guidance documents on the management of disease in wildlife are available from Wildlife Health Australia, including the [National Guidelines for Management of Disease in Free-ranging Australian Wildlife](#).
- [Emergency animal diseases: A field guide for Australian veterinarians](#)
- Information about the response to animal disease outbreaks is available at [outbreak.gov.au](#)
- The [AUSVETPLAN Response Strategy for Avian Influenza](#) sets out the nationally agreed approach to avian influenza outbreaks in Australia and can be found at [animalhealthaustralia.com.au](#).
- The [AUSVETPLAN Wild Animal Response Strategy](#) provides information about management strategies and control measures for wild animals.