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Supporting Australia's Avian Influenza Preparedness and Response

Australia's well-established biosecurity system plays a critical role in maintaining a strong agricultural and environment sector, supporting our economy, health and way of life. However, biosecurity challenges are ever-increasing and we must continue to invest to ensure a strong, resilient and adaptable system that can manage these increasingly complex risks.

In recent years high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1, has spread rapidly worldwide and caused significant impacts overseas for both poultry and wild birds. One strain in particular has also spread to mammalian species including seals, sea lions and dairy cattle, and there has been some limited cases of human infection.

Australia remains the only continent free from HPAI H5N1, however this strain poses a real and significant threat to Australia's people, agriculture, unique wildlife and national economy. It is important that we are well prepared for its potential arrival.

What's being funded

The Australian Government is committing an additional \$95 million to further prepare and protect the nation against HPAI H5N1, in line with the increased risk of incursion. This funding will strengthen surveillance, preparedness and response capability in alignment with a 'One Health' approach – fostering cross-portfolio efforts to mitigate the impact of HPAI H5N1 on Australian agriculture, environment and human health.

The new package provides additional, targeted investments in our national biosecurity system, by:

- enhancing surveillance to ensure timely detection and response if the disease enters and spreads in animals within Australia
- strengthening preparedness and response capability to mitigate impacts for the production sector and Australian wildlife
- supporting a nationally coordinated approach to response and communications
- taking proactive measures to protect threatened iconic species from extinction
- investing in more pre-pandemic vaccines to protect human health.

Biosecurity is a shared responsibility. We are working collaboratively with state and territory governments, communities and businesses to protect our birds and wildlife. This funding will enhance and accelerate these collective efforts.

The new investments are also supported by recent Australian Government led national simulations exercises – *Exercise Volare* – which worked with stakeholders across the country to consider current

arrangements to respond to an HPAI H5N1 incursion and how they could be enhanced to best protect Australia from this threat.

Agriculture

The Australian Government is committing \$37 million over 2 years to protect Australian agriculture by enhancing national coordination of response arrangement and communications, strengthening surveillance and boosting biosecurity capacity and capability across the production sector and environmental biosecurity. This includes:

- \$15 million to enhance national biosecurity response capability and surveillance with key partners including the states and territories through investment in mission critical supplies and response equipment.
- \$10 million to support nationally coordinated communications that provide clear, trusted and consistent messaging for stakeholders and the Australian public regarding HPAI H5N1.
- \$7 million to improve early detection and reporting capacity by enhancing Wildlife Health Australia surveillance activities. This will also support global and national One Health outcomes.
- \$5 million to boost biosecurity and scientific capability including conducting priority scientific activities such as validating point-of-care testing for animals, establishing an industry working group and procuring avian influenza vaccines to protect vulnerable threatened species.

This significant new investment builds on the Government's previous commitment of \$6.9 million earlier in 2024 to enhance national HPAI H5N1 preparedness and response capability in recognition of the increased threat of HPAI H5N1.

Environment

The Australian Government is committing \$35.9 million over 2 years to boost and accelerate H5N1 HPAI preparedness planning and protective action by using the best data available to target actions for our most at-risk species and important natural places. This includes:

- \$7.1 million to support wildlife susceptibility and disease spread analysis and decision support tools – this will identify the species and places most at risk and practical actions to protect these assets. It will expand surveillance across wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin and our remote island parks. It also includes preparedness efforts in Commonwealth national parks and keeping on-ground staff safe.
- \$28.8 million for preparedness and response planning and to support practical actions for priority species in captivity and in nature, for example:
 - species and site-specific planning to identify actions to directly mitigate the spread and impacts of HPAI H5N1 for our most susceptible wildlife
 - enhance biosecurity and management of threatened species in captivity
 - safeguard and build resilience for our most at-risk species in nature by mitigating other threats, such as predation by invasive rodents of seabirds on key offshore islands

We will work closely with states and territories, key conservation partners and other experts to design and deliver these commitments. These investments will be complemented by important environmental biosecurity activities led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and by existing Australian Government investments for threatened species and important natural places, including the \$1.1 billion [Natural Heritage Trust](#), \$225.4 million [Saving Native Species program](#) and the [National Environmental Science Program](#).

Health

The National Medical Stockpile (NMS) is an important response capability and maintains a strategic supply of pre-pandemic influenza vaccines and antivirals. The Australian Government is committing \$22.1m over two years to manufacture and store pandemic influenza vaccines that will better prepare the Australian Government to respond quickly to a potential influenza pandemic.

Why this is important

Australia remains the only continent free from HPAI H5N1, however we must be prepared for the possibility it will arrive in this country. We are building from a strong biosecurity system and continued investment in our established national arrangements and partnership approach to managing biosecurity challenges is critical. We know from the international experience and the unprecedented global impacts of HPAI H5N1 that an incursion would significantly impact the agriculture, environment and health sectors.

This package contains measures to assist the agriculture industry by investing in surveillance, preparedness and initial response measures to mitigate the impact of any HPAI H5N1 incursion on production and agricultural sectors.

Australia's native species are already under considerable pressure. Management options to mitigate the significant additional threat posed by HPAI H5N1 to wildlife are limited. This means our actions to directly protect species and places from HPAI H5N1 must be targeted to those most at risk and where we can feasibly make a difference. The best way to protect our native wildlife is to ensure there are strong, healthy populations at multiple locations. This means continuing, and where possible increasing, work already underway to protect and recover our imperilled species.

While human infections with avian influenza viruses are rare, the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control is focused on ensuring Australia is as prepared as possible for potential human infections.

Australia's states and territories, industry participants and broader national stakeholders all have a role to play in managing Australia biosecurity. These measures will assist to keep us all on the front foot to manage a potential incursion of HPAI H5N1.

How much will this cost?

	2024-2025 \$m	2025-2026 \$m	Total \$m
Agriculture portfolio	31.0	6.0	37.0
Boosting response capability	10.0	5.0	15.0
Integrated national communications	10.0	0.0	10.0
Enhancing the One Health Surveillance Initiative	7.0	0.0	7.0
Biosecurity and scientific capability	4.0	1.0	5.0
Environment portfolio	10.5	25.4	35.9
Preparedness Fund - Protected Species and Places	6.4	22.4	28.8
Protected Species Action Framework	4.1	3.0	7.1
Health portfolio	4.4	17.7	22.1
Vaccines for human health protection	4.4	17.7	22.1
Subtotal	45.9	49.1	95.0

More information

Learn more about the Australian Government response to the threat of HPAI H5N1 at birdflu.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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