



Antarctica New Zealand Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Guidance

What is Avian Influenza?

- Influenza A virus subtype H5N1, commonly known as ‘avian influenza’ or ‘bird flu’, is a viral disease that primarily effects birds but can also infect land-based and marine mammals including, in very rare instances, humans. To date, **there are no cases of human-to-human transmission**.
- There are many strains of avian influenza, and two categories of virus that impact birds differently:
 - Low pathogenicity (‘low path’) avian influenza (LPAI), which typically causes few or no signs in birds but can possibly mutate to become HPAI:
 - High pathogenicity (‘high path’) avian influenza (HPAI), which can cause severe signs and high death rates in birds (and mammals).
- LPAI viruses exist in wild birds and have been detected in New Zealand. Biosecurity New Zealand has an active surveillance programme for LPAI and tests around 2,000 samples from wild birds each year.
- To date, HPAI H5N1 has spread globally very rapidly decimating wild bird populations across the world (all continents have confirmed HPAI H5N1 cases), and pinnipeds in South America and the Antarctic.
- **In July 2026, New Zealand had its first confirmed detection of HPAI in a brown skua.**
- The first report of HPAI H5N1 in the Antarctic region was confirmed on Bird Island, in the sub-Antarctic in October 2023 and on the Antarctic Peninsula in [December 2023](#).
- By mid-2026, HPAI H5N1 had been confirmed in both birds and seals within the Antarctic Peninsula region and as far east as Heard Island (in the Australian Antarctic sector).
- **There are currently no suspected cases on the sub-Antarctic Islands south of New Zealand.**
- According to the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) risk assessment for 2024/25, skuas and Adélie penguins were the most impacted species in Antarctica. Southern elephant seals, Antarctic fur seals, wandering albatrosses and skuas were the most impacted species in the subantarctic.
- There is a heightened risk of HPAI H5N1 introduction or spread in Antarctica by infected migrating seabirds, as well as by unintentional human transfer between wildlife colonies on contaminated boots, clothing and equipment.
- The predicted risk level of HPAI H5N1 arriving in the Ross Sea region in the 2024/25 austral summer season was “low”. With the virus travelling further east each year, the risk of HPAI arriving in the Ross Sea region is increasing.



Currently reported and sequenced hosts
infected with H5N1.

Source: <https://www.bv-brc.org/outbreaks/H5N1>

What to look for: clinical signs of disease in wildlife

HPAI is highly contagious and can cause high mortality in wildlife. An infected bird usually displays visible signs of the infection but there is evidence where Antarctic birds (e.g., Adélie penguins) test positive for H5N1 and are asymptomatic, highlighting the importance of good biosecurity practices irrespective of whether the virus is suspected.

The most common signs of HPAI in wildlife include:

- **Neurological issues – rapid onset of seizures**, stumbling, walking in circles or without coordination, loss of balance, drooping head, tremors, twisting neck
- **Reduced mobility** – difficulties in locomotion and partial paralysis, dragging legs, **loss of balance**
- Other more subtle clinical signs of infection can include fever and **lethargy** (lying down, unresponsiveness, drooping wings), swollen head
- **Abnormal posture** with wings outstretched, and opisthotonos (severe hyperextension and backward arching of the neck) characterised by backward arching of the head, neck, and spine caused by muscle contraction, drooping wings, trembling head and body
- **Respiratory distress** (predominantly in seals) such as gaping (mouth breathing), sneezing, gurgling, rattling, excessive mucous around the muzzle of seals
- **Skin haemorrhages** in birds in areas without feathers (e.g. at head and leg level)
- **Conjunctivitis**, closed or excessively watery eyes, opaque cornea - altered iris colouration (darkened)
- In marine mammals, respiratory issues, neurological issues, tremors and paralysis
- Splayed or **twisted posture in infected carcasses** (kelp gulls, skuas) commonly observed in seabird species
- **Multiple dead animals** in one area that is unusual in comparison to usual mortality rates

For a visual example of HPAI in seabirds, please refer to this [video](#) compilation by SANCCOB.

Important Note: The absence of any clinical signs does not mean the absence of infection. It is also worth noting that wildlife carrying other diseases and infections can cause similar symptoms.

Ongoing surveillance and monitoring are essential to detect the spread of HPAI in the region but also to understand its impacts. To assist with monitoring the movement of HPAI throughout the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic regions and increase our understanding of its impacts on wildlife populations, the SCAR Antarctic Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) have established a central repository to record and monitor all suspected and confirmed HPAI outbreaks in the region - [Sub-Antarctic and Antarctic Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 Monitoring Project | SCAR](#).



Figure 1. Splayed or twisted posture in skuas positive for HPAI on Beak Island (Image: Meagan Dewar).

Risk to human health

- H5N1 bird flu viruses first emerged in southern China in 1996. Those viruses caused large poultry outbreaks in Hong Kong in 1997, which resulted in 18 human infections.
- Since 2003, more than 23 countries have reported more than 880 sporadic human infections with H5N1 bird flu viruses to WHO.
- The H5N1 bird flu viruses that are currently circulating in wild birds and poultry in much of the world are genetically different from earlier versions of the virus and emerged to become the predominant subtype of HPAI H5 in the fall of 2021 (Figure 2).
- Illness in humans from all bird flu virus infections has ranged in severity from **no symptoms or mild illness to severe disease that resulted in death**.
- In countries where the current strain of HPAI is present, human infection has been rare and generally only found in people who have had a lot of contact with infected birds or other infected animals.
- Although additional human infections associated with exposure to infected animals or contaminated environments are expected to occur, the overall public health impact of such infections at a global level, at the present time, is considered minor.
- To date, **human to human transmission has not been reported**.
- New Zealand has never had a human case of avian influenza.
- At the present time, based on available information, the current risk to human health as assessed by the WHO is that **the risk for human infection remains low** but is **low to moderate for people who are occupationally exposed to infected animals** (e.g., enclosed infected poultry farms, fur farms, cattle farms or other close contact conditions with infected animals).
- Usually, in infected animals, the virus is present in both faeces and respiratory secretions. The virus can survive in bird droppings and other organic matrices for at least 35 days at +4°C and up to 6 days at 37°C. At temperatures below 0°C, the virus can remain viable for many months.
- The spread of avian influenza to humans is rare but can occur through close contact with infected birds or animals, such as their droppings, saliva or contaminated materials. This can include:
 - Touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching infected live or dead birds or other animals.
 - Touching your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching droppings (poo) or other animal materials (urine, blood and other body fluids) of infected birds or other animals.
 - Inhaling or getting infectious droplets or dust in the eyes, nose or mouth.

The **most common symptoms of HPAI** in humans include (Health New Zealand, 2025):

- A fever (>38 C) or feeling hot
 - Conjunctivitis
 - Upper respiratory tract infection symptoms (sore throat, cough, cold, congested nose)
 - Flu like symptoms (including aching muscles, sore throat, cough, cold, lethargy)
 - Diarrhoea
 - Stomach or chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
- Once avian influenza is 'suspected' in a wildlife population, restrictions on entry to that colony will apply, and only trained and appropriately equipped personnel will undertake direct contact with infected wildlife.
 - Anyone who may have been exposed to infected, or potentially infected, animals should be monitored for symptoms and stay away from all wildlife to reduce further spread among humans and animals.

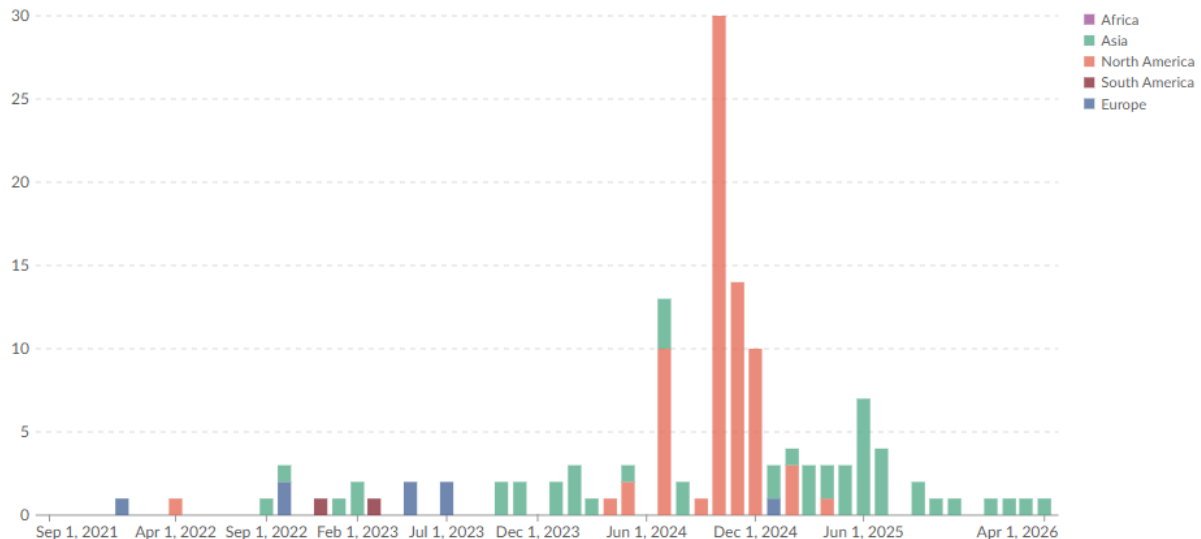


Figure 2. World Health Organisation monthly reported cases of H5N1 in humans Sept 2021 - April 2026 (Source: [H5N1 influenza: monthly reported cases](#)).

This guidance has been informed by the following resources:

- COMNAP: [Heightened Risk of HPAI in Antarctica — COMNAP](#)
- SCAR's Antarctic Wildlife Health Network: [Biological Risk Assessment of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in the Southern Ocean](#)
- SCAR's Antarctic Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) monitoring project [HPAI database](#)
- SCAR Antarctic Environment Portal HPAI information summary [The Spread of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza H5N1 in Antarctica - Antarctic Environments Portal](#)
- IAATO [2025-26 Avian Influenza Protocols](#)
- Health New Zealand: [Avian-Influenza-Health-Safety-Guidance.pdf](#) (noting that this advice applies to all strains of avian influenza, not just H5N1)
- World Organisation for Animal Health Avian Influenza webpage: [Avian Influenza - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)
- World Health Organisation practical interim guidance to reduce the risk of infection in people exposed to avian influenza viruses: [B09116-eng.pdf](#)
- World Organisation for Animal Health: [Avian Influenza and Wildlife: Risk Management for People Working with Wild Birds - WOA - World Organisation for Animal Health](#)
- World Health Organization [Q&A Influenza A\(H5N1\)](#)
- World Health Organization Avian Influenza [Fact Sheet](#)
- World Health Organization public health assessment 2025 - [Updated joint FAO/WHO/WOAH public health assessment of recent influenza A\(H5\) virus events in animals and people](#)
- Ministry for Primary Industries [HPAI Site](#)
- Ross Sea region National Antarctic Programme HPAI Guidance (see Discovery)
- SANCCOB's observed behaviours [video compilation](#)



Guidelines for visiting a wildlife colony

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI H5N1) was first detected in the Antarctic Peninsula region in December 2023. There is an ongoing risk that HPAI will spread further in Antarctica during the 2026/27 austral summer. All events and personnel working in or near bird colonies must carry out surveillance before entering any colonies or working with any wildlife species and for the duration of the work. The below measures must also be followed to reduce the risks to wildlife and human health.

Before you go to Antarctica

- HPAI has now been detected in New Zealand.
- Ensure all your clothing and equipment that may come into contact with the Antarctic environment is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected with either soap or some other type of detergent. Pay particular attention to cleaning boot treads, velcro fastenings, pockets, backpacks and camera bags.
- Do not visit wildlife colonies or farms or come into contact with concentrations of wildlife within 42 -72 hours prior to departure to Antarctica.
- If you live on a farm or interact with wildlife (e.g., poultry) as a part of daily life, you must take extra care to sterilise and clean all clothing and equipment that has come into contact with wildlife prior to deploying to Antarctica.
- **Do not visit sites in New Zealand where HPAI is known or suspected to be present before your departure. If you have visited these sites, all shoes or clothing that may have come into contact with contaminated areas must be sterilised prior to travelling to Antarctica.**

Before leaving Scott Base

- Only people who have been approved via an Environmental Impact Assessment may access sites with wildlife colonies (this does not include the pressure ridges in front of Scott Base).
- Ensure all clothing and equipment (including boots, backpacks, camping equipment, markers, bags, field gear, etc.) are cleaned and disinfected (e.g., with soapy water, 70-90% ethanol or Virkon™ S) before leaving base and every time after visiting a colony or moving between colonies.
- No poultry or other avian products are to be taken in or near bird colonies.
- Ensure all event members are fit and well. If any event personnel are not feeling well or have flu-like symptoms, notify Scott Base as departure may need to be delayed.
- All event personnel with plans to work within wildlife colonies must have read and been briefed on the Antarctica New Zealand's Avian Influenza Guidelines and Preplan (i.e., this document and HPAI video).
- Make sure you have a pair of binoculars and an Avian Influenza Pre-Assessment Surveillance Form on hand (provided below).

Before visiting a colony

- Before entering a wildlife colony, undertake a visual assessment using binoculars from a distance of at least 150 meters as far as practicable, to identify any of the clinical signs of infection and/or clusters of dead animals, ahead of any personnel entering a colony. This should take around 10 minutes of observation.
- If signs of HPAI are suspected or large numbers of dead individuals are observed (unusual mortality event), **do not enter the colony.**
- Complete the Avian Influenza Pre-Assessment Surveillance Form. As a minimum, note information such as date, time, location, species affected (may be multiple), HPAI signs and approximate number of individuals (sick/dead). **Photographs or videos are extremely valuable.** Report this information as soon as possible to the Summer Base Leader who will contact the Policy and Environment team as per the preplan.
- If HPAI is suspected, the wildlife colony should not be accessed for a minimum of 48 hours and the response plan below should be activated. The only personnel that may access the colony would be those who are authorised and trained by MPI to undertake HPAI sampling on dead animals.
- Observations may be carried out via a drone (if a fully trained and permitted pilot and drone are available), so long as the drone flights have been approved and reviewed via the EIA and CONOPs process.
- Videos or photographs of wildlife with signs/symptoms from a safe distance are very useful and should be sent to the Senior Environmental Advisor as soon as possible (n.gardiner@antarcticnz.govt.nz).

During a Visit

- Always keep a safe distance from animals (10 metres, as far as possible), unless you are permitted otherwise.
- Do not sit, lie or place equipment on the ground within a wildlife colony, especially in areas that contain faeces and potentially contaminated soil/water, unless absolutely necessary (e.g. for science related activities), to prevent contamination of clothing or equipment.
- Never touch wildlife, dead or alive, unless you have a permit that allows for the handling of wildlife and Animal Ethics approval from your institution.
- Personnel approved to handle healthy wildlife should wear appropriate PPE as per your approvals including disposable gloves, dedicated cold weather clothing and disposable/re-usable overalls.
- Basic biosecurity measures and strict hygiene practices should be in place to protect wildlife colonies and humans.
- Personnel authorised to work with Antarctic wildlife should perform frequent hand hygiene, either with alcohol-based hand rub or by washing their hands with soap and water if visibly soiled. This should be done before and after contact with animals and their environments.
- Efforts should be made to avoid touching the nose, eyes or mouth with the hands during work. Changing into clean clothes after work is recommended and a 'clean' versus 'dirty' area should be designated at campsites to ensure that clean 'living' clothes are not mixed with potentially contaminated work clothes.
- If suspicious symptoms, signs of infection are suspected or unusual mortality is observed, **only personnel authorised and MPI trained** to carry out the handling of infected dead animals or the collection of potentially infected samples will have access to wildlife colonies. Special restrictions will apply, and sampling will follow the MPI Field Guide for Collecting Samples for Avian Influenza Testing (found inside the MPI supplied HPAI test kits and at the end of these guidelines).
- For those who are not trained to test, and HPAI is suspected during a visit, leave the colony immediately and notify the Summer Base Leader who will work with the Policy and Environment team on determining next steps.
- Videos or photographs of wildlife with signs/symptoms from a safe distance are very useful and should be sent to the Senior Environmental Advisor (email above).

Post-Visit Biosecurity

- Boots, clothing and equipment should be decontaminated before (in New Zealand and again at Scott Base) and after (at the site of the colony and again at Scott Base) any wildlife colony visit. This includes decontamination between visits if visiting multiple colonies in the same day.
- All boots, clothing and equipment should be brushed to remove faecal and soil material and then decontaminated with a disinfectant such as 70-90% ethanol or Virkon™ S or they can be removed at the site of the colony and double bagged for decontamination at Scott Base following current procedures.
- Decontamination should occur, as far as practical, before transport back to Scott Base. If decontaminating at Scott Base, where possible, pack used clothing and equipment in a plastic bag for transport and follow SOP BS 006 Disposal of biological materials from the field for decontamination at Scott Base.

Post-Visit Reporting

- Any personnel that have worked within or visited an area near to wildlife colonies (e.g., visitors to Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds) should complete an HPAI surveillance form, even if HPAI is not suspected.
- Completed HPAI surveillance forms should be emailed to: n.gardiner@antarctic.govt.nz

IMPORTANT NOTES:

If symptoms / signs are suspected, it is important for this information to travel through the correct channels as outlined in this guidance. In the first instance, the information should be treated as confidential. Staff should initially avoid telling friends or family, or posting about it on social media channels. The Communication Flow Chat (page 13) should be followed.

If at any stage, anyone who has been working in close proximity to (potentially) infected animals falls sick with the symptoms described above – a medical assessment in New Zealand will be required and it is likely that CIMS will be activated to manage this individual's safety and perform a Medevac.

Avian Influenza Pre-Assessment Surveillance Form

Visual Survey

Date and time:	Name and event number:
Location:	Coordinates:
Observation method (i.e. visual, binocular, other):	

Scan colony for signs of unusual behaviour and mortality

Species:	
Observations:	
Unusual behaviour observed?	Yes / No
If yes, estimate of number of individuals affected?	Individuals
If yes, estimated of percentage of individuals affected?	%
Notes:	
Mass mortality observed?	Yes / No
If yes, estimate of number of individuals deceased?	Individuals
If yes, percentage of individuals deceased?	%
Notes:	
Supporting evidence (i.e. video / photo, other):	
HPAI suspected? Yes / No	If yes, do not enter colony, report immediately to Scott Base.
Survey observations reported to Antarctica New Zealand's environmental team?	

Antarctica New Zealand's Avian Influenza Response Plan

Phase 0 No signs of HPAI	• Avoid visits to wildlife colonies, farms or close contact with concentrations of wildlife prior to departure to Antarctica. • Avoid sites where cases are suspected or confirmed in New Zealand prior to departure to Antarctica. • Undertake a visual assessment ahead of working in or near local wildlife colonies for signs of HPAI and complete the pre-assessment surveillance form. • No change to current ways of working with wildlife populations. • Adhere to existing biological safety and hygiene practices including existing biosecurity checks of cargo, scientific equipment, clothing and footwear. • Follow Antarctica New Zealand's Biosecurity Policy and SOPs: – SOP BS 004: Disposal of natural materials at Scott Base – SOP BS 005: Handling of poultry and avian products – SOP BS 006: Disposal of biological materials from the field • Increase awareness of HPAI in bird and seal populations in Oceania. • Monitor and report signs of infection in relevant bird populations in areas of activity.
Phase 1 Increased risk of HPAI (Current alert level)	• Avian influenza confirmed in Antarctic Peninsula region, sub-Antarctic's and/or Gateways, but not in the Ross Sea region. • Follow Phase 0 precautions. • All personnel working in or near wildlife colonies must follow these guidelines, including undertaking a visual assessment for signs of HPAI before entering the colony and complete a pre-assessment surveillance form (to be sent to the Senior Environmental Advisor). • All personnel working in or near wildlife colonies must have level 1 PPE on hand as per the PPE matrix. • Review risk assessments (i.e., EMPEROR risk tab) for activities involving close proximity to direct contact with birds and mammals. • The Policy and Environment team are monitoring the status of HPAI in Antarctica and are in contact with Ross Sea partners to monitor any developments in the region. • Response preparedness in anticipation of move to 'Phase 2'.
Phase 2 HPAI suspected in bird colonies	• HPAI suspected in Ross Sea region (either by Antarctica New Zealand, another National Antarctic Programme, or a tour company). • Once Antarctica New Zealand is notified, the Policy and Environment team will be in communication with MPI and relevant experts for advice. • The Scott Base Leadership Team (SBLT) notify all personnel and contact field teams to pause all work requiring physical contact with wildlife. • The Policy and Environment team lead a risk assessment and further surveillance planning initiatives in conjunction with SBLT and relevant New Zealand expert agencies (to confirm the virus and for any disease management efforts). • Only personnel authorised and trained to carry out the handling of infected animals or the collection of potentially infected samples will have access to wildlife colonies with suspected HPAI. • The Policy and Environment team will provide SBLT with advice on whether work should continue at wildlife sites where <u>no</u> HPAI signs/symptoms are suspected.

	- As with Phase 1, any personnel <i>with permission</i> to continue entering wildlife colonies must undertake a visual assessment for signs of HPAI and complete the pre-assessment surveillance form. Note: Level 2 PPE may become a requirement for these personnel. - Decision by Policy and Environment team – move back to Phase 1 or progress to Phase 3 based on monitoring results. - In the scenario where personnel are already working within a colony and signs/symptoms are suspected during work – the above steps should be followed, and the SBLT and the Policy and Environment team will decide whether CIMs will be activated. - If possible, take photographs and videos of sick animals (at a safe distance) as this helps with the identification of HPAI.
Phase 3 HPAI confirmed in bird colonies	- HPAI confirmed in the Ross Sea region. - The Policy and Environment team will give SBLT the instruction to cancel all work in or near impacted colonies with signs / symptoms. - Work at colonies with <u>no</u> signs / symptoms will be paused for further risk assessment and surveillance planning (to confirm the virus and for any disease management efforts). - Only risk assessed and approved HPAI research activities to proceed. - Only personnel authorised and trained to carry out the handling of infected animals or the collection of potentially infected samples will have access to bird colonies. - Local seal populations to be closely monitored for signs/symptoms or unusual mortality levels. - It is unlikely that personnel aside from qualified individuals will find themselves already in a colony where HPAI is “confirmed” (confirmation takes time). But in the unlikely scenario that this happens, the SBLT and the Policy and Environment team will decide whether CIMs will be activated. - If possible, take photographs and videos of sick animals as this helps with the identification of HPAI.
Phase 4 HPAI suspected or confirmed in seal populations	- Suspected or confirmed HPAI within seal population. - This poses a higher risk to human health as the virus is more likely to transmit between mammals. - The SBLT to notify all personnel and cease all interactions with all wildlife in the field and near Scott Base (e.g., walks on the pressure ridges will be temporarily cancelled). - The Policy and Environment team will undertake a risk assessment and obtain specialist advice. Further surveillance and monitoring efforts may be implemented by the Policy and Environment team. - The Policy and Environment team and the Scott Base Leadership Team will determine if CIMs needs to be activated. - Monitor the health of any individuals (humans) who had recently visited sites with potentially infected mammals.

Key Principles of Response for Phases 2 – 4

If HPAI is suspected or confirmed, the following Key Principles apply for scenario: living or working in a wildlife colony that starts to show signs / symptoms

Protect our people

- PPE to be worn when moving outside until expert advice received - N95 masks & goggles as minimum.
- Increased hygiene practices – sterilization of hands, clothes equipment, particularly before moving into 'clean' shelter area.
- Shelter at camp until expert advice received.
- Monitor health of personnel.

Reduce risk

- Inform all field parties at / near to colonies.
- Postpone current and future field events / fam trips near to colonies.

Understand the situation

- Request as much detailed information as possible from the field team.
- Request detailed observations from all field teams at / near colonies.
- Request photos and short videos [15-30secs] from field teams.
- Pass information to AntNZ Enviro team who sit as representatives on the NZ HPAI interest group and RSR HPAI coordination group.
- Follow Communication Flow Chart (page 13).

Seek expert advice

- AntNZ Enviro team to request expert opinion from working groups.
- If AntNZ Enviro team are unavailable, expert advice can be sought directly via the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline 0800 80 99 66.

Plan for egress

- Develop operational plans for potential pick up of field teams.

Collaborate

- Work together across functions to assess options and plan a suitable response.

Field team on site response	Scott Base initial response
If HPAI suspected • Daily site observation identifies potential of HPAI outbreak – signs / symptoms, increased mortality, ‘snotty’ or dead animals. • Contact Scott Base with observations. Provide a detailed report of what you are seeing. • Daily Event activities are cancelled until further notice. Expect 48hr stand-down. • If possible, send pictures, videos (15 – 30secs) of sick animals to Scott Base / Environment team. • GPS or geographical location within the colony if possible. • Maintain distance from wildlife. • Disinfect hands and clothing before moving to shelter. If possible, remove contaminated clothes before taking shelter. • Shelter at camp (preferably away from wildlife) until instructed by Scott Base. • Monitor health of personnel. • Don N95 masks if moving between tents / shelter. Don goggles outside if there is windblown dust or guano. • Wait for further instruction from Scott Base. • MPI trained personnel may be asked to collect samples from dead animals, if samples have not already been collected. Plan for pickup and return to Scott Base • Take advice from Scott Base regarding timing of pick up – shelter at camp until notified. • Provide SitReps and weather observations to Scott Base. • Pack personal equipment only, until given further instructions on packaging / labelling any contaminated equipment. • Plan for safe decontamination of equipment on site before pick-up. Identify what PPE will be required. • Get clean travel clothes ready for transport to Scott Base, or don Tyvek suit and follow Mario Zuchelli SOPs if travelling to Terra Nova Bay.	Scott Base Comms Op: • Take accurate notes of the reported situation from field team. • Inform field team to identify a shelter at camp that can be kept clean (e.g., sterilize / remove clothes before entry). Inform field team to wait there until further notice • If camp is in close proximity to the colony, instruct field party to don N95 masks and goggles when outside of tents, or if conditions are windy or dusty. • Inform the Scott Base Duty Supervisor immediately. Scott Base Duty Supervisor: • Provide SitRep to AntNZ Duty Manager. • Follow Communication flow chart (see page13). • Seek advice from Enviro team. If Enviro team are unavailable, the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline may be called 0800 80 99 66 for assistance. • Inform all AntNZ field parties at or near wildlife colonies that HPAI is suspected at another location. • All Event activities at / near colonies to be postponed until decided by Enviro team. Expect 48hr stand-down. Plan for egress Develop operational plan for pick up. Consider the following while waiting for expert advice: • Establish IMT: Brief Duty SAR, pilot, and SBLT on current situation. • Utilise HPAI Guidance, and other field related Pre-Plans as guidance for egress planning. • Collate weather forecast and plan around any constraints. • Plan other impacted events that may be delayed. Inform Duty Manager of these impacts, and assess if personnel South should be delayed. • Begin planning for egress or evacuation from the field. • Organise PPE to be taken for pilot and field team - N95 masks & goggles as minimum. Apply the expert advice if pilot is required to wear PPE on the day. • Plan to use ethanol solution for wiping down boots, equipment, and the helicopter. • Cleaning of the helicopter skids can be done on snow or sea ice near to the site (i.e., if the helicopter takes off from a guano covered location, if safe it may be able to land again nearby in snow or ice, which may help to scour off some of the contamination). • Plan to isolate contaminated equipment at Scott Base. Expert advice should be taken for cleaning, isolating, packaging, labelling and importing equipment to NZ.

AntNZ Support Actions	
Chch Duty Manager: - Collect accurate information from SitRep. - Follow Communication flow chart (page 13) i.e., inform Enviro team immediately. - Maintain comms with SB Duty Supervisor. - Coordinate any additional logistics or cargo with Chch staff – logistics and procurement.	AntNZ Environment Team: - Seek immediate expert opinion from MPI via the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline 0800 80 99 66. Share observations, photos & video. - Notify MFAT, the NZ HPAI Inter Agency Interest Group and Ross Sea region HPAI Whats App group. - Request probability of HPAI (from MPI experts) based on observations and video / photos and provide advice on management at site. - Provide advice to Chch DM or direct to Scott Base and work in conjunction with SBLT to form response plan, including activation of CIMS.

Antarctica New Zealand phases of preparedness and response

	Phase 0 (preparedness)	Phase 1 (preparedness)	Phase 2 (response)	Phase 3 (response)	Phase 4 (response)
Regional spread	No HPAI in Antarctica.	HPAI in Antarctic Peninsula, sub-Ants, or Gateways.	HPAI <u>suspected</u> in birds in the Ross Sea region.	HPAI <u>confirmed</u> in birds in the Ross Sea region.	HPAI <u>suspected/confirmed</u> in mammals in Ross Sea region.
HPAI symptoms / mortality	Mortality at baseline. No individuals with signs / symptoms.	Mortality at baseline. No individuals with signs / symptoms.	Mortality at or above baseline. Individuals showing suspected signs/symptoms.	Potential mass mortality. Individuals showing definite signs/symptoms. Or animals are asymptomatic.	Mortality at or above baseline. Individuals showing definite signs/symptoms, or no symptoms.

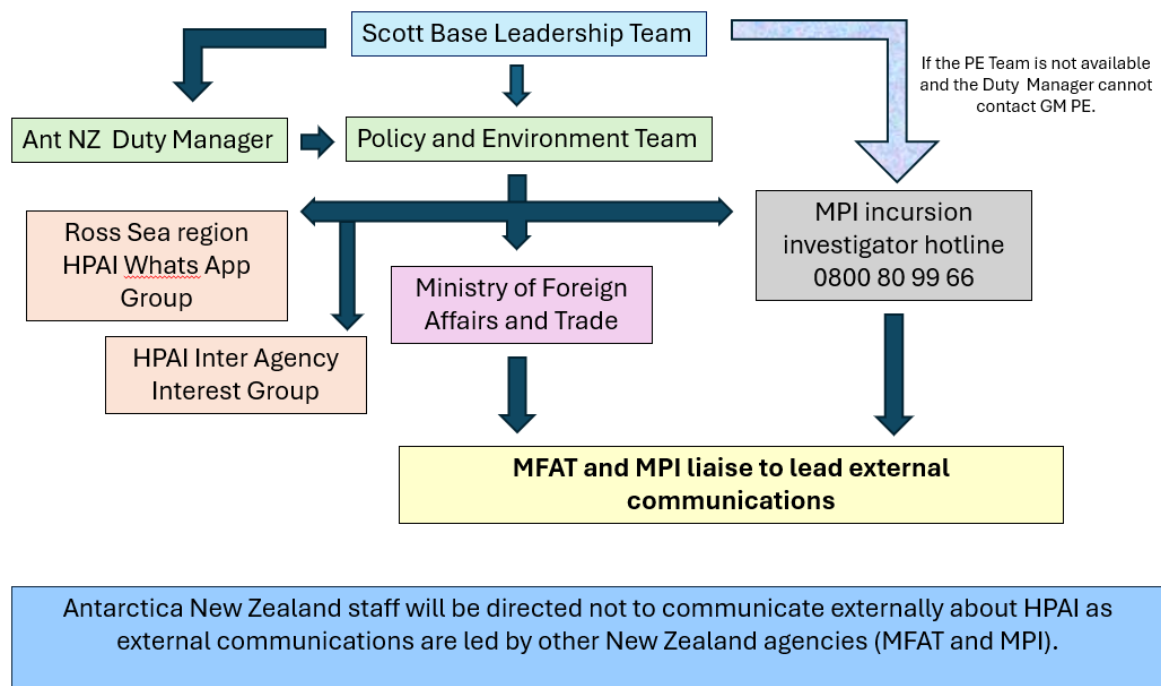
Tiered PPE levels and disinfection procedures for fieldwork at Antarctic wildlife colonies – noting that Antarctica New Zealand currently should not require level 4 as this is only for personnel who are actively handling or sampling infected wildlife.

Levels	PPE and disinfection procedures
PPE Level 0	BAU high personal hygiene should be maintained in the field e.g., after field work, hands, arms, face should be washed and hands sterilized before eating or drinking. Clothing and equipment should be sterilized to the greatest extent practicable before returning to Scott Base. SOP BS – 006 to be followed at Scott Base.
PPE Level 1	<i>Previous level</i> , plus: have on hand N95s and protective eyewear in preparation for a shift to Phase 2.
PPE Level 2	<i>Previous levels</i> , plus: N95 mask. Protective eyewear to be worn (if safe to do so) in windy/dusty conditions.
PPE Level 3	<i>Previous levels</i> , plus: protective eyewear to be worn (regardless of conditions), protective waterproof gloves (nitrile or latex) and waterproof over-clothing (preferably Tyvek suit/plastic overalls/waders).
PPE Level 4	<i>Previous levels</i> , plus: two layers of gloves (nitrile or latex) and full-body waterproof clothing (disposable Tyvek suit). Hair should be covered by overalls hood. There should be no gap between gloves and sleeves (use tape if needed).

HPAI Risk overview / PPE matrix

Risk of activity	Activity	Phase 0	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
LOW	Working in the Ross Sea region, but not near wildlife or colonies.	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 0
MILD	Working in the Ross Sea region near or within wildlife colonies. Not handling wildlife. Maintaining 10m distance.	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 1	PPE Level 1	PPE Level 1	PPE Level 1
MEDIUM	Working in the Ross Sea region near or within wildlife colonies. Directly handling <u>healthy</u> wildlife.	PPE Level 0	PPE Level 1	PPE Level 1	PPE Level 2	PPE Level 2
				Prepare to escalate to Level 2 (scenario dependent)	Prepare to escalate to Level 3 (scenario dependent)	Prepare to escalate to Level 3 (scenario dependent)
HIGH	Working in the Ross Sea region near or within wildlife colonies. Directly handling HPAI <u>infected</u> wildlife.	N/A HPAI confirmed	N/A HPAI confirmed	N/A HPAI confirmed	PPE Level 4 Nobody in 2026/27 should be in this scenario.	PPE Level 4 Nobody in 2026/27 should be in this scenario.

COMMUNICATION FLOW CHART



MPI Field Guide for Collecting Samples for HPAI Testing (also found in MPI test kits at Scott Base)

IMPORTANT:

- Only personnel who have received training from MPI are authorised to undertake sampling and any sampling efforts should be discussed with the Policy and Environment Team who will liaise with MPI (as per the communications flow chart).
- Trained New Zealand personnel are only authorised to sample dead animals; not live animals.
- Only those authorised to enter a wildlife colony, may enter for sampling purposes. MPI trained Scott Base staff in season 2026/27 are not authorised to enter a wildlife colony for sampling purposes.



FIELD GUIDE FOR COLLECTING SAMPLES FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA TESTING

MPI ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY

Thank you for your work in responding to avian influenza

You will be taking TWO swabs from each bird.

- One is from their ORAL cavity
- One is from their CLOACA

1. Put on PPE.
2. Get TWO sampling kits ready nearby, in a place you can reach them.
Refer to Image 1 to see sampling kit.
3. **Oral swab:** Remove the first swab from the sterile packaging.
Keep the tip of the swab clean until it is brought into contact with the bird.
4. Place the tip of the swab into the mouth of the bird. Roll it across the back of their throat with a sweeping motion — do this five times.
Refer to Image 2.
5. Place this swab into the collection tube that contains DNA/RNA Shield, break or cut the end of the swab off so that the cap will close. Ensure lid is firmly shut.
6. **Cloacal swab:** Remove the second swab from the sterile packaging.
Keep the tip of the swab clean until it is brought into contact with the bird.
7. Place the tip of this swab into the cloaca of the bird. Rotate the swab five times.
Refer to Image 3.
8. Place this swab into the collection tube that contains DNA/RNA Shield, break or cut the end of the swab off so that the cap will close. Ensure lid is firmly shut
9. Repeat the above steps for each dead bird in the group being sampled.
10. Place collection tubes into a ziplock plastic bag. Disinfect bag and gloved hands, then overpack with a second ziplock bag.
 - a. If sampling multiple groups, clearly label each outer bag with the group identifier (e.g. sticker on outside or insert label into second ziplock bag so it is visible from outside).
11. If sampling multiple groups, repeat steps above so the number of bagged samples equals the number of groups.
12. Remove PPE. Fill in the HPAI Survey123 application OR the AHL Submission form. Include the same group identifiers used to label the sample bags.
13. Place all ziplock bags into a biobottle, and biobottle into a courier bag. OR place ziplock bags into a cardboard box or courier bag with crush-proof packaging material.
14. Label outside of courier bag/box with:
 - HPAI Response
 - The Sampling Set Identifier from Survey123 OR Investigation Number (if not using the app)
 - Specimen Reception, MPI Animal Health Laboratory, 66 Ward Street, UPPER HUTT 5018

FIELD GUIDE FOR COLLECTING SAMPLES FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA TESTING



Image 1. DNA/RNA Shield Kit (opened)

Kit contains 1 swab and 1 collection tube



Image credit: MPI Animal Health Laboratory

Image 2. Oral Swab Technique

Position the tip of the swab at the very back of the birds mouth, in their throat. Sweep the swab across the back of their throat, rolling the swab in your fingers as you do so.



Image credit: Dunedin Wildlife Hospital

Image 3. Cloacal Swab Technique

Place the swab into the cloaca and rotate the swab gently.



Image 4. Double bagged samples

Double bag the collection tubes in ziplock bags and tightly seal. Clearly label outer bag with a group identifier (that matches the submission form/Survey 123 app).